SALLY FOUND OUT

LILIAN GARIS

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SALLY FOUND OUT

"NUTHIN' HAPPENED," ROSETTE LISPED, "BUT I JEST FOUND IT, THA'S ALL."

Sally Found Out. *Frontispiece* (*Page* 159)

SALLY FOUND OUT

BY

LILIAN GARIS

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"JOAN'S GARDEN OF ADVENTURE," "CONNIE LORING'S GYPSY FRIEND," "CLEO'S MISTY RAINBOW," "A GIRL CALLED TED," "SALLY FOR SHORT," ETC.

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Sally for Short
Sally Found Out

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Sally Found Out

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SALLY FOUND OUT

CHAPTER I

BIG BUSINESS

ROSETTE came to a full stop. That is, she dropped the dish towel and bent her other knee so that the golf stocking slipped down in a regular accordion pleat, below the place where little girls used to wear garters.

"You jest doan know," she drawled in her soft southern voice, with the accent that only one of Rosette's dark color ever can achieve. "You white girls jest doan know," she insisted again, bending her left knee and letting that stocking slide right down as far as it could go.

Sally set her basket of shiny red apples on the shiny zinc-covered table. It stood in the center of the big old-fashioned kitchen, and Rosette was supposed to be working at the sink on the other side of the room. But she wasn't working now: she couldn't work and

talk ever, and now she was talking to Sally Graves.

"Tha's it. You-all thinks you knows, but you doesn't. Here I is, wif moar work 'n' I kin do, and you-all doan know how to find any. Ain't that funny, Sally?"

"Very," said Sally crisply. "These apples are from the country, away out in Monmouth County. South Jersey, you know——"

"Yes, I knows——"

"And Mother wanted Mrs. Turrell to have some before they got dry."

"Sure. Tha's right. They's fine." Rosette walked to the table and picked up a big apple. "They's jest like we has down home." She sniffed the apple. "Juicy and right nice. I loves 'em that a-way."

"They're for Mrs. Turrell, you know," Sally remarked pointedly. "Tell her I'm sorry she wasn't in."

"She's gone to take a walk—always walking, she is. I gets enough walking around kitchens." Rosette slid back to the sink to prove that assertion. "But you jest listen, Sally. If you wants to make a little easy money you jest take a job like this." Then Rosette dried one cup that had already dried itself thoroughly.

Sally hesitated. The colored girl was

funny, of course, but she did have a job, an after-school job, too. She washed and dried dishes for three dollars a week, doing a day's supply at one time, from seven in the evening, after dinner, until all the dishes were finished and the sink properly scoured. It certainly was easy, in a nice place like Mrs. Turrell's, and three dollars a week was twelve dollars a month for one hour-a-day's work.

This simple calculation flashed through Sally's mind as she stood there. Of course, it was doing kitchen work outside of home, but wasn't all work outside of home, and wasn't kitchen work as good as any other kind? Perhaps scrubbing or doing such rough work as that would be unpleasant—but merely washing dishes didn't seem so bad.

Rosette noticed Sally's indecision and she went right back to her lecture.

"You don't go to high school, Rosette," Sally felt obliged to remind her.

"I doesn't go, but I'se jest the same age as my cousin, an' she goes. An' I looks like her too." Rosette dimpled appropriately then. She had dimples in her fat brown cheeks, and her big eyes rolled around as if they knew all about the dimples. Rosette was a pretty colored girl, and, as she had told Sally, her services as a kitchen maid were in real demand.

And if she did not get to high school, like the cousin who looked like her and was just the same age, at least she had a job. This duly impressed Sally.

"I wouldn't mind working a bit," Sally started in with a silly smile of apology. She knew it was silly too.

Mind it? Wif your three bones a week to buy, to buy—" Rosette wasn't sure what Sally would buy with three "bones a week," but she took a chance. "You kin buy lovely silk stepins for two ninety-eight," she hazarded, letting her under lip drop by way of emphasis.

Sally laughed. "Stepins? I guess I'd buy sport shoes first; I need a new pair badly. Well, anyhow, Rosette, I'm glad you like your job and when I start in I won't cut you out," she promised finally.

"Now listen here, Sally," Rosette was wound up it seemed, and should have made a good boss, with her display of talent. "Ef you want *this* place, you kin have it, 'cause I'm goin' to give it up mysel'. I'm too busy to come away ovah heah when I have work right close by my own house. I have two places where they eats earlier than Mrs. Turrell does." She lowered her voice discreetly as she said that.

"But you wouldn't leave Mrs. Turrell without giving her due notice?" said Sally in surprise. "She couldn't get anyone right away—you know."

"Tha's what I'm a-sayin', she oughta could get *you*. And you said one day you'd like a job."

"Oh, I remember now," laughed Sally, just then recalling the reason for Rosette's interest in her financial affairs. "I did say that one day, didn't I?"

"You sure did!" Rosette smiled with eyes and dimples and let her rounded lips part in real approval. "Tha's it. Now you 'members, doan you? An' you take this place. Mrs. Turrell is a right nice woman to work for, right nice an' easy," Rosette tackled the dish towel now with sudden energy. She had a clock on the little shelf and that hadn't stopped as she had. In fact, it was going right on and showing plainly how very late the hour was.

Sally left the kitchen, going along the porch to the little front path and thence along the way back to her home. Rosette was funny, of course, but maybe she was right; maybe white girls in just ordinary circumstances, in which quite a little more allowance money

could be pleasantly spent, maybe such girls, including Sally, "jest didn't know."

"Because we are white doesn't make us better, when we need money and have to take it from others," Sally reflected, "and I hate taking Mother's money."

Sally Graves, christened Salva but always called Sally for short, was the only child of Clara Graves, a young widow who was still attractive and was Sally's pal as well as her mother. Not that Sally undervalued the glorious name mother, but because calling her mother Clara, made her seem more chummy and less responsible, sort of two girls together. Sally's grandmother, a real girl herself in spite of relentless years, often gave Sally the full text, making it Sally-for-Short with two full grown hyphens. Even when she called out Sally-love, she would add mischievously "for Short, dear," because she had loved and chosen the original name Salva, which is Latin and means safe. Now, how could a girl expect to go through life with a name like an ad for a new kind of oil burner or something? So Salva was positively Sally, who was positively a wide-awake girl, who loved to share things with her mother, even to sharing responsibility in money matters.

This last trait, however, was destined to

lead the heroic Sally into many a queer tangle, for business ability may be somewhat natural to some girls, but there is no girl born with actual experience, and experience must have an important place in all business affairs of real importance. But what girl believes that? A rosy outlook seems sure enough, and so the old bugaboo "Experience" is too readily thrust out of sight. It was that way with Sally Graves.

As she walked along after her strange talk with Rosette, she met Mary Winser, a girl from Sally's class in school. Mary was the sort of girl who always seems reserved and even a little bit stiff, but she was a great friend of Sally's.

"Do you know, Mary," Sally began as they left the wide main road and turned to the pretty bend that led to the more private territory, "I don't feel one bit like sticking high school out and wasting all the time I could be spending on a business education. I *am* going into business, just as quickly as I can get Mother's consent. I decided that at camp last summer."

"But a high school education will make you so much more valuable in business," Mary promptly pointed out.

"I can't see that the mere diploma will

help," Sally argued. "I won't get much more actual knowledge this year, and I could get going in some business."

"But you see, Sally, you're pretty young—younger than most girls in our class, and they say when you learn quickly you forget quickly," Mary insisted again.

"I hope I do," laughed Sally. "I'd like to forget a lot of things I learned and not too quickly either. But I'm just crazy about a shop. I want to run a nice little tea shop and have charge of everything myself. Want a job?"

Mary enkindled her rare smile. It was all the better for her natural restraint, and Sally instantly responded to its hidden mirth.

"Of course, you think I'm crazy," Sally went on, "but I believe loving business must be a sign of business talent, just as loving anything else is taken for a sign of some other talent. Don't you think so?"

"It seems reasonable enough," Mary replied. "But what makes me smile is the idea of Sally Graves running a shop. You may think you have a talent for business, but *I* think you're too generous. What about our candy sale? Didn't you give all that was left away before we had a chance to auction it off?"

"Oh, well, but, Mary," demurred Sally, "didn't those poor little youngsters from the farm school need candy? Think of the treat. Wasn't that worth a lot to the club?"

"You are a first-rate publicity agent, Sally, and that should mean being a good business woman," Mary agreed. "But I wish you wouldn't think of leaving school. I'd hate to lose you, for one thing."

This little outburst of affection from quiet Mary meant more than the simple words she expressed it in, and Sally squeezed her arm in understanding. Mary was wise and exactly the right sort of confidant for impetuous Sally. But that colored girl had touched off Sally's sense for money making, and earning some as soon as practical was now uppermost in Sally's mind. She had no idea of telling Mary all of that, for even with a chum one must remember other people's feelings. Sally's mother had had to be in business since Sally's father died, but that did not mean telling the world about their financial affairs.

"I think it's wonderful to be independent," she said suddenly, as Mary was ready to go the other way toward her own home.

"As if you haven't always been just that," Mary replied lightly.

"Oh, I don't know. It seems to me we all

care a lot about what people say and that doesn't mean independence."

"Shouldn't we?" parried Mary.

"But that's not being independent," Sally repeated.

"Why not? One can care about other people's opinions, but do what one thinks best, can't one?"

"If one could know what is best," went on Sally just playing with words.

"Well, I'm satisfied to walk in the rut that others dig," Mary finished. "I'd hate to plow up a new rut all my own."

"Oh, I'd love that." Sally was trying to reassure herself. Certainly if she took the advice of Rosette, the practical colored maid, and started in to work evenings in Mrs. Turrell's kitchen, she would be digging her own rut. And what would her friends think of that?

Mary waved back gayly when she reached the old beech tree, but Sally's wave in return was less enthusiastic. Her mind wasn't on hand waving, not even on Mary's new blue hat that set so becomingly rakish on her friend's brown hair.

For Sally wondered if she should stick to school. She knew her mother would most surely want her to do so, and she knew, al-

though she had no idea of admitting it even to herself, that her own wild desire to get into business was very much a matter of wanting adventure. She was tired of school; most girls get tired of school just before their final big interest in school springs back again, just before finishing time. But Sally didn't know that. She only knew that she wanted to do something new and different, and she was determined to win her way to that alluring prospect.

CHAPTER II

FIGHTING FOR A CHANCE

"If I were pretty, Mom, I might follow your indulgent advice and do nothing but look the part." Sally was flouncing around in an absurd way, making her long legs fly in and out in brand new dance steps, while her mother sat there arguing against that idea of her leaving school before graduating.

"But, Sally dear, you talk so foolishly."

"I like to, Mom."

"That's the real trouble. You just expect to do what you *like* to do."

Sally made a silly little curtsy and dropped a peck of a kiss on her mother's cheek.

"And I *like* you."

"Sally, you must listen. I won't be sidetracked."

"I'll get Granny to make you give in. She's always on my side," Sally challenged.

"Granny has always spoiled you, Bonny, but now the mother must have her say. You

have just got to stay at school." Mrs. Graves, who was Sally's Mom or Sally's Clara, according to mood, realized she was to have a real battle on the subject, for Sally had been given as much, and perhaps more freedom in managing her own affairs, than most girls had, and it would be hard to make her see now that staying at school or leaving school was indeed a serious matter. Her mother called Sally Bonny, because her hair was black and she had sparkling eyes that matched, although she could as well have called her Olive because her complexion indicated that name. Sally was more than pretty; she was classical looking, with straight, chiseled features, and only her smile gave her away.

Just now mother and daughter were in the family living room, and if a room really does show personality this most certainly did. Sally had procured the artistic davenport from the Gibson's sale, when old Mrs. Gibson sold out and went away to live with relatives. It had cost only fifteen dollars because the springs were gone, but Sally knew its value and loved its graceful lines. The other mother, called Granny because she wasn't a bit like a granny, but young and pretty and one of the girls with Sally and Clara, had gladly paid to have the davenport done over,

and it was well worth all the attention expended upon it. It had taken days to decide upon the covering that toned beautifully with the rich old mahogany wood frame, and now the completed masterpiece graced their home like a testimonial to Sally's unerring taste in its selection. Around this were grouped other pieces, a large and a small chair, end tables and a darling little tip table from another sale, that Sally had stood out in the pouring rain to take part in.

Their home was their own, shared equally by Sally's granny, Sally's mother and Sally herself, and all three were so imbued with business ideas that it was no wonder Sally longed to become a more active partner in their interesting exploits.

"Just look at that davenport," she pointed out pridefully now as her mother sat back, sort of resting for a new attack in the school argument. "Doesn't that show I'm a good business woman?"

"It's a lovely piece."

"And I bought it for fifteen dollars."

"And your grandmother paid thirty-eight to have it re-covered."

"She wanted to. I could have had old Dobbs fix the springs for ten and then cover it myself," Sally declared emphatically.

Her mother did not contradict her. Sally had always wanted to do such outlandish things as paint the kitchen, the spare room set and all the garbage cans, and somehow they had always turned out surprisingly well.

"I've often thought, Sally," her mother remarked slowly and almost solemnly, "that your success in doing queer things was not as profitable as it seemed. It has drawn you away from the more important things——"

"Is there anything more important than a beautiful green garbage can? Now, Mom, I ask you. Is there?" That dimple dimped irresistibly now and Sally's smile was flashing merrily.

"But won't you listen to reason, dear?" pleaded the really anxious mother. "I have only one daughter and I want her to graduate from high school."

"And won't *you* listen to reason, dear? I have only one mother and I want her to have a little bit of comfort—soon."

What could the mother say to that? She herself was a young woman, almost too young to boss successfully the self-willed Sally, and like the rest of their small group, she too was pretty. Her short hair was scarcely a tiny bit gray, although Sally often declared she couldn't wait for it to turn a beautiful white

when the rinsing water worked better if blued a little. Her granny's hair was not white yet, so it looked like rather a long wait for Clara's. Girls may readily understand what this sort of chummy condition meant for Sally, and how it had always led her to believe that mother, grandmother and Sally herself were all equal partners, with equal rights and equal opinions. This was leading her into trouble now. She felt she knew more about school, and her own going and coming to school, than could either of the others. And her mother knew, from years of experience, that Sally should stick to school. She was positive that Sally would not want to go back if she once left, and that she needed every day's education she could possibly afford to take, if she were going to enjoy a balanced life.

Days went by in repeated arguments, pleadings, reasoning and peace conferences. Sally had decided to be firm because she felt her mother was making sacrifices for her. Mrs. Graves had an agency for silk hose and underthings. She had her own list of customers and did very well with her commission and bonus, for she was a good saleswoman. But Sally couldn't see why she should have all the work and all the fun of business while she,

Sally, had merely a pokey old school to go to with a couple of books under her arm.

It was early fall and school was already in session, but winter was a little ways off. It was the season of business inspiration. Everything and everybody worth considering were busy; even the birds were packing up for the winter; the late flowers were holding on tenaciously to their best blooms, but the human storekeepers seemed to Sally to have the best of everything. They were shining windows and showing wares to so great an extent, that others than the school girl whose name was Sally, spent much time before those shop windows, admiring the alluring displays arranged therein.

"You see, Sally dear," her mother tried again after a brief interlude, "what you really want to do is to open a shop."

"A little shop," agreed Sally, brightening hopefully.

"Yes. But you are too young——"

"Nannie Blake isn't any older."

"But she merely ran a tea shop in vacation."

"While *I* was at camp. And it went so well she is running it now after school."

"But don't you see, dear, her older sister is helping her."

"Granny would help me."

Her mother sighed. Sally was being more and more difficult. She just wouldn't reason. She wanted a shop and that was all there was to it; except getting the shop, opening it, starting it, financing it, and getting enough customers to make it pay. These last requirements concerned Mrs. Graves most, but seemed to concern Sally not at all. What bothered her was getting her mother's consent to leave school.

"Mother darling," she began now, in one of her rare outbursts of sensible affection, "if only you will let me try it, I promise I'll go back to school next term if you think best. Won't you, Mom, lovesy?"

"Darling, I hate to oppose you this way. But leaving school is so different from doing other things. Can't you see that?"

"Why is it so tragic to leave stupid old school?"

"Because there is more, much more than book learning, to be gained from school. Can't you see that?"

"Sorry, Clara, but I can't. I can see a lot of things wasted in school, but not much gained."

"I'll tell you, dear," the other suggested in sheer desperation, "wait until the month is out, and then we'll see if we can't agree.

Your father's friend, Mr. Powers, is coming to see us, you know, and perhaps he'll have some practical advice to offer us all."

"Well, all right," sighed Sally, by no means resignedly, "we'll wait for Terance Powers. He's a good scout and maybe he'll see things my way."

Mrs. Graves said under her breath, maybe he would see things *her* way, but Sally didn't hear her.

Strange how folks who loved each other as Sally and her mother did, could so totally disagree on a point like that. Each felt she knew best, each was sure she was struggling for the other's happiness, and yet each took a direct opposite point of view. Long and seriously had Sally pondered upon leaving school, to get into business to help her mother, and to do her part in the general income making for their little family. She felt like a very big girl indeed, to be going to high school while her very little mother went from friend to friend, and from friend's friend to friend's friend, to sell her very best silk hose and dainty underthings. Every single night when Clara counted up her day's receipts, looked over her samples and confided to Sally and Granny her great expectations for more and better business, Sally felt like a coward

to be allowing her mother to work that way for her, while she merely went to school.

"I'm bigger than she is and I'm stronger than she is," Sally would tell herself, "and I suppose I know a lot more schoolbook stuff than she does. So why shouldn't *I* get a job?"

This was no sudden whim. She had been turning the matter over in her mind for a long time, and while her mother was expecting her to get over the notion, she was getting deeper and deeper under it. And when Sally Graves felt like that she was not apt to weaken.

Leaving school! Everybody would talk about it for a while, but after that would they remain her friends? Mary and Eleanor and Adèle would always stick, she was sure of that. In fact, they would think it a great lark if she actually did set up a shop, and perhaps they would even help her, in their off school hours, with serving tea and cookies.

To-day was one of those gorgeous autumn days, when colors of foliage, sweetness from ripened fruits, and sheer beauty from sapphire skies combined to make the world a paradise. Sally felt its inspiration and its thrill urging her on to what seemed to be a goal; the goal of a start in the business world, to earn money, to help her mother, to have part in that free-

dom of self-support which she sensed rather than understood. But how could she win her mother over to allowing her to leave school? Never had there been before such a grave difference of opinion between them, and never had there seemed to be any matter so important for Sally to win. Would the nice Mr. Powers help her? He had been her father's law partner, both working desk by desk, until Sally's father fell a victim to early disease, when the influenza had carried him off ten years ago.

In her anxiety to find some argument that might offset her mother's objections now, she paused long enough to recall what she could remember of that winter's day, when the big, soft snowflakes had fallen upon her father's casket as they carried him away. He was a darling dad, while she had had him, but the time had been all too short. Then, it was Mother and Grandmother who took up the task of home supporting, two women who had never before been called upon for such a definite and responsible task.

"And that's just why," Sally told herself, "it's certainly my turn now. And nothing, not even Mother's positive objection, is going to make me wait a single month longer. I'm going to work!"

CHAPTER III

A MEETING AT JULIA'S

ELEANOR and Adèle were racing down the brookside hill. They really were too big to romp through the streets like that, but it was so tempting a hill, nobody who could possibly run should want to walk down its lovely slope, and Eleanor could run faster than Adèle. The hill only stopped at Sally's back door, and if it hadn't been for the old willow tree standing guard there, it would have bumped right into the house.

" 'Low there!" called out Adèle to Sally. "Get your hat."

"What for? Where are you breaking your necks to?"

"Got a meeting," puffed Eleanor, "a meeting about—about something important."

By this time the girls had reached Sally's front porch, where she had been clipping some lovely late cosmos, that snuggled up to the lattice to save their slender stalks from the rough autumn winds.

"Come along in," invited Sally. "I was just going over to Flint's; I forgot to get bacon with my order to-day."

"Fine housekeeper, forgetting things you can smell a mile, like bacon," teased Adèle. "But we can't come in. Why did you run away from class so quickly? Didn't you know we were going to have a meeting?"

"Basketball," explained Eleanor, "and we're counting on you for——"

"I'm afraid I can't go with the team this year——"

"Afraid you can't!"

Both girls fairly shouted the interruption. Their team without Sally was something beyond contemplation. They followed Sally indoors now, quickly enough. She often did take queer notions, but none as queer as leaving their team at the opening of the season.

For an instant she felt she would tell them simply that she expected to leave school, but somehow she couldn't. That would have been like defying her mother, and Sally had not the slightest idea of doing that. No, her mother should be told first; should give in first, should be the one to say: "Sally is leaving school to take up business."

So she just told Eleanor and Adèle she was

tired of wearing out stockings reeling around the floor after a basketball.

"And my shins, you know," she added merrily, "my shins won't stand another season's abuse. They have more scars than war veterans have," she declared.

"You and your shins!" The girls knew Sally didn't mean a word of that, for the scars on her sturdy legs were merely the feathers in her team's cap, in a manner of speaking, a queer manner of speaking.

"Well," she continued to evade, "you better not depend upon me, that's all."

"Why?"

"Can't I have a secret why?"

"It's got to be a good one."

"It's a very good one."

"Confess. Own up." The girls were each quizzing in turn. Eleanor was vivid as usual, in a glorious blue sweater supposed to reflect her eyes, but even that sweater was a dead color compared with the live blue of Eleanor's eyes. What hair she had was a soft brown, but it really didn't amount to much, for she kept it closely cropped ever since that last permanent went wrong. It had somehow spoiled Eleanor's pretty hair, and being sensible, she just had it shaved off and was waiting for a new crop to come in. But even that

way it was not unbecoming, and her little béret, cocked on her left ear, gave the needed jaunty touch.

As for Adèle, there was no denying the fact that she was a common everyday redhead, with freckles at that. Her freckles had been a trial at camp last summer, but like all redheads, she was as vivid as some colorful wild flower, and just as temperamental. Always on the jump, she made a wonderful basketball player. All in all, the three girls, Sally being the third, were easily the best players on the Nelson team, and the idea of Sally deserting in the very beginning of the season seemed nothing short of dire calamity. Her two chums were still quizzing her about that careless remark lately made. She had said, just like that, they had better not depend upon her for teamwork this season, and it was perfectly clear that she was neither teasing nor joking.

"What do you mean, not to depend upon you?" fired back Adèle, pegging her little tan felt hat at Sally's head as she spoke. "S'pose we're going to lose to the boys' team just because you feel fussy about playing?"

"The boys' team?" repeated Sally, rather seriously.

"I thought that would catch you. Yes, the

boys' team. We're going to play them *soon,* if you want to know."

"And we're going to lick them too, if you want to know that," chimed in Eleanor. "But no foolin', Sal, what's the horrible idea? Not going abroad in an airship or any little thing like that, be you?"

"Don't be silly. Can't a girl ever get off the team just because she makes a basket now and then?" countered Sally. But she was thinking of beating the boys' team, and her words sounded like a real lie or something equally contradictory.

Eleanor went over to the piano and struck a violent chord. It was neither major nor minor but it made an awful noise.

" 'Tain't like you, Sal, to leave us in a lurch, but we got to be a-goin'," she said when the chord died down. "We really are having a special meeting at Julia's, with lemonade and cookies."

"And you can get your bacon on the way back," suggested Adèle. "Come along, lamb, and eat a couple of cookies. Julia's cook made them special, and they're sure to be as full of currants as old Ben's molasses measure is full of flies. There's your hat and here's your coat."

And so they led her off.

Julia's home was one of the most pretentious in Nelson, and when the girls met there it always meant some meeting. Julia herself, too tall to be anything but lanky, was also funny, full of fun, full of chuckles and full of life. She could laugh before and after anyone else, and she could even start all the others going. Her mother was one of those lovely ladies who always look the part and have a good time doing it. Certainly it was fun to go to Julia's.

Just now she was sliding up and down the piano bench, because it wouldn't whirl around like the old one which the cook now used in the kitchen. Julia's shoulders, which must be admitted as stooping a little, were grotesquely draped in the Spanish shawl she had snitched from the beautiful baby grand piano, and in her hair was stuck some artificial flowers also snitched from the decorations, because there was nothing around that looked a bit like a Spanish comb.

"Julia," hummed Alice, who was president of the club because she couldn't play on the team. She never spoke loud, that was the reason she hummed when a racket was going on. She tried again. "Julia, please come to order."

Julia took a long slide the full length of

the bench, went right over the brink and landed on the floor. Even Sally and her two late arriving friends, Eleanor and Adèle, took part in the scramble to pick Julia up, with the result, of course, of another pile of girls falling down.

Talk about a meeting! It was much more like a basketball game, the way those girls rolled around that floor. Poor Alice, the prim little president, just sat over in the high back chair, away back in the corner, with her feet picked up as if she were afraid of a mouse. And she sighed while the other girls yelled and laughed. But, of course, all good clubs need a good president and certainly Alice was that.

"Hey, look out there!" yelled Sally just in time, for Adèle had taken an extra roll and was perilously near knocking over the big yellow Japanese vase.

As she turned she kicked Doris in the eye, maybe. That is, she kicked her some place and Doris yelled:

"Oh, me eye!"

"Hey, there!" called out Sally just then, "unscramble. I'm a housekeeper, I am, and I've got a supper to get."

"Housekeeper?" squeaked Noeline. She would squeak and be mean, of course.

"Yeah," fired back Adèle, "she said housekeeper and she means it. What can you do besides eating taffy?"

"Children! Children!" chirped Julia. "You must not quarrel. You must be good little girls." She was getting to her feet but not very gracefully. Still rocking from the fun of that battle, it was hard to subdue Julia. But when the big clock in the hall boomed out six long, funereal booms, everyone else, even the squeaky Noeline, really did get down to business.

They were naturally "just crazy" to play the boys' team, and it was solemnly announced by Alice, the president, that a match was being arranged for the week before Thanksgiving. And what wouldn't they do to that boys' team!

"And Sally Graves, you see to it that you vanquish that boaster, Tom Harden. Don't let him get near the basket. Do you hear?" admonished Julia, still playing with the piano shawl and getting her fingers beautifully tangled in its long silken fringe.

"You bet," said Sally simply. But the words were a challenge to such girls as Noeline Walters, who openly scoffed at Sally being a housekeeper. Well, if she was a housekeeper she was also a mighty good

basketball player, and somehow she was going to arrange to play that big game.

Adèle and Eleanor were delighted. They loved Sally and hated to lose her from school activities, so that her change of attitude after the meeting was a positive joy to them. Each grasped an arm as they hurried along.

"So that's that," ventured Adèle. "You're a peach, Sally. Not stubborn nor mean nor anything."

"Oh, yes I am, too, both," Sally interrupted, "but I'm also greedy. I want the good things at school like basketball games, but I don't want math and the rest of it. Oh, well," she sighed, "it's awful to be poor."

"And handsome," chimed in Eleanor jokingly. "But never mind, Sally, we're all poor even if we are not all handsome."

"And that snip Noeline crabbing about housekeeping," remarked Adèle. "Just as if she could peel a potato without calling the ambulance. She just makes me sick, boasting and blowing about her own stupidity."

"Don't you know, Dell," pointed out Eleanor, "all weak folks try to boast of their weakness in order to make themselves think less seriously of them——"

"Hey, there!" cut in Sally, "who called the psychology class?"

"Well, it's true just the same," insisted Adèle, "and that's why Noel brags about being such a kid. She's trying to forget she is one."

"Well, you're too deep for me, Dell," Eleanor concluded. "But whatever your process of reasoning, the result, I'm sure, will be just like mine. Noeline is a simp, a simp and a pest in the bargain."

All this was being said and done to save Sally's feelings, for both girls knew Noeline had hurt her. Sally was a natural little housekeeper, and her talent should have been praised and appreciated. For, however distasteful homemaking may be, the fact will always remain, that human beings cannot get along without homes, and so to provide a pleasant place to live in is the very highest of the arts. But somehow that reasoning does not sound true, and the girl like Noeline who cannot peel a potato without cutting her finger, seems smart. It may all be because homemaking is so very old-fashioned and silliness is quite up to date—among certain classes of silly girls.

But Sally didn't want to be paraded as a good housekeeper, just because she was on her way to buy a half pound of sliced bacon from old Mr. Flint's store. Suddenly she

hated bacon, she hated the whole idea of half pound things. She wanted to have her supplies hidden away in big white refrigerators, and brought before her only by a white-capped maid, such as served Julia's family.

"And if I'm a successful business woman, I can hire a maid like that for Mother and Granny," she decided more definitely than ever now, as Eleanor and Adèle left her. "And the way to start is to begin."

CHAPTER IV

DREAMS DENIED

IT WAS old Mr. Flint who gave her the tip. She had bought her bacon in a hurry that evening after the meeting, but next day was Saturday and the family marketing necessitated an early journey to the little village, so early that Sally had time to talk to the pleasant little fat man who always seemed to have time to talk to Sally.

"I think that cut of beef will be best, Mr. Flint," she pointed out critically. "It slices so nicely when it's cold."

"You're right, Sally," he agreed jovially, "and I must say you know a good cut when you see one. That there's prime beef." He patted the big forequarter affectionately before striking the shiny knife blade into its rim. "Your ma should be proud of a girl with your business gumption," he concluded, drawing the knife slowly but scientifically through the big red surface.

"I guess she would be more proud of me if

I though less of business," Sally remarked evenly. "There, that's about right. Is that about three pounds?"

He lifted the chunk of meat to the scales, wiped his hands on his apron, squinted at the figures on the scales and turned to Sally.

"Three and two ounces, call it three even. That's a good guess, ain't it? But why don't your ma like you to know about business? How's that?"

"Oh, I suppose she does like me to understand it, but you know, Mr. Flint, my mother wants me to go to college."

"She would. Clara Graves would. Piece of suet? Of course. And a soup bone. There. Your grandmother'll like that. Wait." He found a bone with meat on it. "Tell her to stick that in the pot and boil it with my compliments."

"With compliments for vegetables?" joked Sally.

"Well, an onion would help and a bit of 'passley'!" he chuckled, enjoying Sally's joke.

"Grandma isn't home just now but Mother and I like soup, so we'll take the treat with the same compliments," Sally answered.

"Sure you will. A person who don't like a good dish of fresh vegetable soup don't know what's good for him. But about this

business idea," he was wrapping the meat. "You know, Sally, if a smart girl took hold of that old mill toy shop and ran it for the winter for the town folks and the summer for the city folks, there'd be money in it." He slapped the package down on the big block to punctuate the statement.

"You mean the haunted old mill shop, of course," Sally answered. "I've often thought of that place. What was the matter with it? Why did Jordan give it up?"

"Some silly story about what the old mill *used* to be." A customer was coming, that is, the door opened and a fat woman with a black oilcloth bag let herself in the shop. That was a signal for Sally and Mr. Flint to stop short on their private conversation. He picked up the bag and handed it to Sally as she in turn handed him the money for it. And as he smiled in saying good-by Sally was certain she had a friend in Mr. Flint, who might be counted upon for support if it ever came to her starting up in business in her own home town.

And of course his mentioning the old mill toy shop set her thinking of that possibility. Why couldn't she try that? She knew how to "paint and potter" with almost every old thing, and it was that sort of work that did most to stock up the toy shops. And Mr.

Flint knew everybody in the place, so he would be sure to know who owned the old mill and to whom she might go for information about it—if it ever came to that in her now uncertain plans.

But what about her mother? Sally couldn't really leave school without her consent, she told herself that over and over again, and there seemed small likelihood of her getting it, as things were standing. Mrs. Graves so wanted Sally to go on to college, believing Sally deserved college and that somehow they would be able to manage it.

To the mother it was all a matter of doing things for Sally. Just as she had done when Sally was a tiny tot she wanted to do now, the difference being merely in the particular thing to be done. With Sally growing into young womanhood, it was a matter of doing things for her mother, for herself and for the chummy Grandmother. With her health and her new experiences, she was daily acquiring that sort of ambition that comes to every normal girl between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. One may want to paint, another to write, another may have musical talent; but whatever the bent, it will make itself felt in those years. Sally wanted to go into business, wanted it so badly that nothing else seemed

worth while. And what seemed unreasonable to others was simply inescapable for Sally. So there she was, at it tooth and nail.

Queer how things happened all in a bunch. There was Rosette, the colored girl, offering Sally her job at washing Mrs. Turrell's dishes. Then there was old Mr. Flint, hinting, if not saying outright, that Sally was the very girl to run the old mill shop, and here was Sally herself more determined than ever to do something, anything almost, to earn money.

All of which meant merely idle dreaming, unless her mother could be persuaded to see things, as Sally said, from a practical viewpoint.

"Oh, if only I can make her see it as I do," she reasoned. "I just can't give in, because I know I'm right. And darling little Mother is just too proud to let me go to work. A big strong thing like me, working off energy on basketball when I could be working it off at a paying job."

There were voices in the living room as Sally entered the side door into the little hall, between kitchen and dining room. She was carrying some of the smaller packages from her Saturday marketing, and so she hurried on into the kitchen to deposit them there. Her

mother had not yet gone out, having only a few business calls to make on Saturday, and Sally wondered who the early caller might be.

Presently her mother called to her.

"That you, Sally? Come in and see Cousin Margaret. We've been waiting for you."

Sally entered the living room to greet the guest. She was an old friend of her mother's, a school friend really, but Mrs. Buckley was always fondly spoken of as Cousin Margaret, and the way she enthused at meeting Clara's big daughter showed how much she thought of Clara.

"Why, Sally! You are neck and ears bigger than your mother," she beamed. "My! isn't it lovely to have a daughter so fine and strong?"

"And imagine, Margaret, she wants to leave school," Mrs. Graves at once made known.

"What for?"

"To go to work," burst in Sally almost desperately. "What's the use of *being* a big daughter if I must still depend upon little Mother?"

"Spoken like a man!" exclaimed Margaret Buckley. "There are girls just as good as boys——"

"Why not better?" challenged Sally.

"Why not?" agreed the guest, warming to Sally's mood.

"But I have always planned to have daughter go through college." Mrs. Graves' voice trailed off sadly, as she sat there looking at the defiant Sally.

"I know, Mother. But just why is all that more important than my helping you with all this?" Sally's gesture took in the home and its attributes.

"This is only temporary, Sally dear. But your education means your life," declared Mrs. Graves rather solemnly.

"And *your* health means your life," Sally retorted.

"Good for you, Sally!" cheered Mrs. Buckley. "When a girl shows your spirit, I believe she has the character to make good. Clara, why don't you let her have her way?"

Sally could have fallen on Mrs. Buckley's neck in sheer gratitude. But she was making no false moves just then.

"But, Margaret, I have only one daughter, one child," almost wailed Mrs. Graves, "and I have always dreamed of such a wonderful future for her. If I let her turn in now and go to work," the words just choked on each other as she painfully uttered them, "I feel

sure she would grow tired and discouraged long before her time."

"Which just means, Mother, that *you* are tired and discouraged and fear the same fate for me," burst in Sally. "Well, I'm young and healthy and just crazy to get busy. Every day in school is agony to me. Not that I hate school——"

"No, you have always done so well," her mother interrupted her.

"And that's one reason why I know enough for a poor girl," pressed on Sally. "What's the great big idea of my dressing up and going off with one book under my arm, while *you* go out with samples in a satchel?"

"Sally!"

"Well, Cousin Margaret knows it's true."

"But—I like it——"

"Yes, you like it because we need the money," Sally argued, determined to press her argument to a finish. "There's no shame in being poor, but there is shame in letting one carry the burden for another."

"But, Sally dear, I'm your mother. It's my duty and I love to do it."

Sally wanted to kiss away the sneaky little tear that had oozed out of her mother's soft gray eye and was trying to get down her cheek. But she knew that surrendering to sentiment

would be the very death of her purpose, so she turned her own head away, not to watch that noble tear. Mrs. Graves caught it just as it touched her dimple, and disposed of it secretly.

They all three seemed sort of caved in without either side winning a point, when a turn in the whole proceedings suddenly decided things for them.

"There's one thing certain," began Mrs. Buckley out of clear sky, "good help, trustworthy help is hard to find. I just dropped in here now, as I was telling your mother, Sally, while I'm out searching for someone to stay with Grandma. She isn't sick, but she's getting queer, and we just can't leave her with Susan while I go away. I'm going. I *have* to go, to Washington and I probably will be gone a month——"

"You mean someone to stay with your mother, Mrs. Terhune?" Sally inquired eagerly.

"Yes. Mr. Buckley will be home nights and after Susan finishes with her work she can attend to Mother. But I can't go away in comfort and not leave someone else with her. She's apt to do anything she takes a notion to, and Susan is putty in her hands," Mrs. Buckley smilingly admitted. "Mother isn't sick,

but too lively for her years. She's almost eighty, you know, Clara."

"Why couldn't *I* stay with her?" blurted out Sally, quite breathlessly.

"You?" both women exclaimed.

"Yes. Why not? Couldn't *I* do what's to be done?"

"There's really nothing but being a companion, just reading to her," Mrs. Buckley explained, as if defending the position.

"And I'd just love it!" Sally's voice fairly rang out with sincerity. "Oh, Mother, please, please," she pleaded, going over to her mother's chair and putting her two hands on her mother's shoulders. "Let me do it, Momsey," she begged. "I just can't stand it not to do something!"

"Sally!"

The silence that followed was electrified. Mother and daughter were both all but in tears, and Mrs. Buckley thought it best to remain in her own corner, quietly.

"It would be lovely," Sally finally murmured, "I'd love that wonderful house——"

Her mother glanced up in acknowledging that the Buckley house was indeed wonderful, but she said not a word.

"And I'll pay at least fifty a month," Mrs. Buckley now added cautiously. "Really,

Clara, it might not be a bad idea to let Sally try her hand at earning money, since nothing short of that will satisfy her. You know I have always had a personal interest in our Salva."

"Goody for you, Cousin Margaret!" sang out Sally. "You are certainly a friend in need."

"Well, of course, I don't want to interfere," the guest hurried to interpose, "but for a short time——"

"If she leaves school," murmured Mrs. Graves, "I know she will never go back."

"Now, Momsey, that's plain silly. If I leave school for a month and earn fifty dollars, I may be mighty glad to go back. You know I could easily make up my work."

"Well." It was a long, long sigh that escaped from the conquered mother, and Sally hardly waited for it to finish.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" she shouted, tossing a cushion at the cat. "Now, I can look myself in the face. I'm going to earn my own bread and butter, and lettuce. I've got to have lettuce," she attempted to joke. But it was no joking matter. To take care of Mrs. Terhune, to be with her in the big old house, hidden away in tangles of shrubbery and great knots of trees; the idea spelled romance for Sally,

if not actual adventure, and its prospect thrilled her gloriously.

Then, too, it was so much safer to start on a salary than to start with obligations, as she would have had to do in undertaking a shop. And fifty dollars a month clear profit! Visions of affluence soared around her. Of course, she would be lonely, but being busy would overcome that, and she was determined to be busy, if by doing nothing more than rolling balls of yarn for Mrs. Terhune's knitting, she would keep herself good and busy.

But Sally's mother was not so happy over the prospect. To her, it was an end of wonderful dreams, the thought of letting her darling Sally give up school to earn money. She hated the idea and she could not hide the fact just now.

But hadn't she hated the idea of letting Sally go to camp that first summer? And hadn't camp been the very thing best for Sally?

CHAPTER V

GETTING WHAT SHE WANTED

AT LAST! The relief was so great it all but gave Sally a headache. She could really and truly leave school and do something to earn money. Leave school! Now, with the prospect so close at hand, she began to understand what she would lose. The companionship of her friends, the daily competition in so many little things, like looking well in this or that dress, combing her hair a certain way, having some special book to read and discuss—all these little things that had made up her life at school would suddenly be gone from her, and in their place what would come?

"I've grown up awful quick," she teased herself. "Here I am a full-fledged business woman with a job that will pay me fifty dollars a month."

She tried to keep her mind on that point; the pay. Never mind school loneliness, just remember the return. And she would cut loose from school altogether, basketball and

all. Not even her best girl friends, nor best boy friends either, for that matter, would induce her to consider so much as playing in the big game at Thanksgiving. They could get someone to take her place, and they should give some other girl a chance. There was Mabel Hayes. She had worked hard and was a good player, if she was a little too fat; let her play guard at the big game.

Sally's grandmother returned from a visit to friends the very day after the great decision had been reached. Calling her Granny, as Sally did affectionately, only served to point out how young she was, how alert, how much an important part in all their doings. Sally loved her Granny. She always reasoned things out with her and there was no danger of Sally hurting her pride on money questions. Sally's mother was different. Discussing money with her always seemed like a personal affront. As if she could have been in any way to blame for the limited means that obliged her to sell silk underthings, and for the circumstance that now caused Sally to insist upon leaving high school. It was very silly, of course, but Sally avoided the subject of money with her mother and joyously indulged in discussing it with Granny.

"You look just wonderful, Granny," Sally

admired. "That hair cut is simply great."

"Flatter-box," answered Granny. "I don't wear my hair short for style you know, duckie."

"I know," Sally interrupted. "You had it cut after the fever and it came in lovely and curly. Now why couldn't I get a fever curl? But Granny, listen." She changed the subject like shifting a motor gear. "Do you think I'll be able to manage Cousin Margaret's mother?"

"Old Mrs. Terhune has been queer for a long time, Sally," her Granny replied, "but I don't think she's hard to manage. I was in to see her a few weeks ago and she talked a blue streak. But that's all right. Just let her talk. All you have to do is to see she doesn't discharge the maids or stop the milkman. She seems to like giving orders but she gives them the wrong way at the wrong time," replied Sally's grandmother, who was of course, Mrs. Virginia Perry.

"Then I'll bet she fires me first thing," Sally laughed. "If I interfere with her orders she won't like me a bit. Will she, Granny?"

"But she may not know you are engaged to help her, so you'll be safe, I imagine," Mrs. Perry went on. "She will regard you as a visitor, and I hope she'll like you." This was

said with a complimentary glance at the girl, who had just paused in her picking up of the little things, displaced in a regular dusting of the always dustless room.

"She's just got to like me," Sally declared. "I'll find out what she likes to eat and I'll feed it to her morning, noon and night. They say old ladies just love to be babied, and since I can't spoil her at this late day, I'll start in to humor her. And I'm going to try to agree with her in everything. They say that's awfully important too in the peace plan with old ladies. Don't cross them."

Mrs. Perry laughed as Sally talked on, but she warned her that things would happen entirely unexpectedly, and that queer old ladies were just that; queer. Mrs. Graves, Sally's mother, was now quite as interested as they were in the new undertaking, for having at last consented to let Sally leave school, she very reasonably was willing and eager to do all that she could to help Sally, with what Sally insisted upon calling her first job. Mrs. Graves naturally did not like the term.

The telephone rang early in the evening and it was Mrs. Buckley calling. She wanted to know if Sally could go over that night, as she had to leave for Washington before she

had planned to, and her husband would have to take her to the city to get her train.

"But you were not to stay at night," Sally's mother at once objected.

"Now, Momsey, I was to stay if needed and I'm needed," announced Sally. "Don't worry. I'll have a fine time in that big house with two maids and Peter the chauffeur. I'll just ring for things right and left. Where's my writing pad? Oh, I see it," she rambled on, showing something very much like nervousness in her haste to be ready when the Buckley car would call for her.

But deep down in her heart there was a queer little tug of apprehension as she kissed those two dear girls (her mother and grandmother) good-by. Going out in the world alone? To earn money. To become a part of the great business world; to leave her girlhood's care-free days behind her, as she entered upon the responsibilities of companion to the queer old lady, Mrs. Terhune! How could she guess, that even in the little town she thought she knew so well, there could be hidden in a beautiful home such an interesting story as the old lady waited to tell her?

"Sally dear," cautioned her anxious mother, "be sure to telephone at once if anything turns

up to worry you. Mr. Page has promised to run in should you call me, and I would call him. They only live around the corner from Buckleys', you know."

"Yes, I know, Moms," Sally gayly answered. "But I know a quicker way to get help than that. What's the matter with all our handsome motor cops? Can't they fly to the rescue of a damsel in distress?"

"There's the car," her granny told her, a strange little catch in her own voice. She didn't want Sally to go to Buckleys', for she alone in their home group knew just how queer that old lady there really was. But all arrangements having been made when she returned from her visit, there was no use in voicing her fears. So she patted Sally's shoulder fondly as she kissed her again, and when the big car rolled off she turned to pat the shoulder of her own daughter, Sally's mother, who just couldn't resist the comfort of a good cry directly after Sally had left.

"She's such a baby," murmured the mother, accusing herself of letting Sally go away that way—it hurt her.

"But she's as plucky as a boy," put in the grandmother, "and it may be, Clara, a little experience now will cure her. Just give her a chance and if I know our Sally, she'll be

"I'M NOT A NURSE AND I WOULDN'T SPY ON ANYONE," FIRED BACK SALLY.

willing enough to go back to school if she discovers she's not fitted for a business life just yet."

"I only hope so," sighed the mother. "I would never have given in to let her leave school except for having that hope. Besides, we know Margaret Buckley so well," she concluded with a stifled sob.

"Yes," added the other reflectively.

"Why do you say it that way, Mother?" Mrs. Graves asked quickly, somehow noting in her mother's voice a hint of misgiving.

"Oh, I don't know, Clara. I never felt that the old lady was exactly as queer as she pretends to be," Mrs. Perry answered, with assumed indifference.

"Why, Ma, whatever do you mean?" demanded the daughter in sudden alarm.

"Now, I don't mean a thing, Clara, except that the old lady strikes me as being more cute than queer, and I have thought for a long time that Margaret was foolish to excuse so many things she does just because she thinks her old and queer."

"Mercy me! I do hope Sally won't get into any trouble——"

"Now there you go, Clara, imagining things. How on earth could Sally get into trouble just because the old lady is tricky?"

"Well, I don't know. Sally is such a child in spite of all her pretended courage. I do hope the old lady doesn't impose upon her. This house is just lost without her already," sighed Mrs. Graves, looking at the vacant chair that had always been Sally's place if she sat down, which it must be admitted was not so very often. "I just don't know how we are going to let her stay there evenings. I hadn't thought of that at all," she complained irritably.

"But it wouldn't be reasonable, Clara, to have her run home nights and leave the old lady alone with the servants unless Mr. Buckley could be there," the other woman pointed out. "And even at that, I don't see how Margaret could expect a man to stay in to watch things for her mother while she pays a companion."

"Well, you see, Ma, Margaret had no idea of asking Sally to do this. She was just out looking for someone—she had heard there was an English nurse down in the enclosure who was to be at liberty, and she was on her way there, when Sally jumped in and literally asked for the place."

"It will give her experience and certainly that is an important part of all education," Mrs. Perry remarked reassuringly. "You can

depend upon Sally. She won't have her eyes shut to things around her, and there are two women maids there besides Peter, the chauffeur. So she's all right; and I suppose enjoying the new surroundings by this time," finished Mrs. Perry. "Here's a new book I brought you from the city. Just settle down and look it over, Clara," she urged her daughter. "You must be tired and I don't blame Sally at all for wanting to take some of the work off your shoulders."

"It seems to me, Mother, *you* were trying to do something new yourself, or else why were you so sly about that little visit?" Mrs. Graves asked her mother presently.

"Now, now, there you go imagining things again!" But Mrs. Perry was not hiding the effect of the words, evidently touching her own little secret. She got up now and busied herself at doing nothing, just to be doing something.

"Of course, Mother, we are all free, you and I and Sally. But you wouldn't do anything without telling us, would you?"

"No." It was a long no, just like the yes she had answered a moment before. Each little word was intended to hide much more than it had expressed, but Clara Graves was not deceived.

"It seems to me, Mother," she began again, attempting and partly succeeding in showing some cheerfulness, "we might just as well get a big sign painted and hang it over the front door, 'Expert Business Women to Hire!"

"We might better," responded her mother, dryly.

CHAPTER VI

CROSSING SWORDS

DARKNESS had come down quickly, and the October evening seemed angry and resentful. Winds gathered in the far-away trees and tossed themselves at the heads of the more secluded oaks and maples, through which Peter, the trusted chauffeur of the Buckley home, was now driving Sally.

But she didn't feel any thrill in the luxury of the car or in the knowledge that a liveried man was driving her. Every time her shoe touched her little bag it somehow gave her a queer, sinking, lonesome feeling.

"It's because Mother has been so opposed," she told herself, but somehow that did not seem to be the real reason.

By the time the car turned into the long, winding driveway, the wind was bearing the tree branches down so heavily, they brushed the car roof with a savage scratching sound. Sally was not superstitious, nor did she ever shiver, unless she was very, very cold, but she

quivered a little now, as Peter drew the car up to the side steps, jumped out, opened the door and took her bag.

The lamp was not lighted on the porch, but as the maid, whom Peter called Susan, opened the door, a stream of light from a fancy Turkish lantern within, showed Sally the way.

"Good evening," she said cheerily, but Susan just mumbled something, and turned away.

"I've come to—to be with Mrs. Terhune," Sally went on bravely.

"I know. Upstairs," and Susan led the way, bending low over every step and holding on to her skirts, the way women did when skirts had to be held on to, and from their length it was evident Susan's was modeled in that selfsame way.

Sally held her head high and was, as the girls would have said, "putting on a brave front." Turning around the first hall after Susan, that is, the first upper hall, she felt the rich, deep-piled rugs, soundless beneath her feet, and she was conscious of being near the lovely bedroom Mrs. Buckley had occasionally brought her to visit in. They had always been close friends and had it not been for Sally's mother's business interfering, they

might have had more pleasant times together, for Mrs. Buckley was genuinely fond of them all.

Susan never turned her head as she trudged along, and Sally wondered why anyone need be so sour looking. Finally, they reached the room and the maid stopped to tap on a door.

"Come!" called the voice of a woman Sally knew to be Mrs. Terhune's, and she also knew that whatever else she might be, Mrs. Terhune wasn't deaf, for she answered that light tap promptly enough.

Susan flung open the door, made some sort of high sign that Sally felt a lot like laughing at, turned, in the long voluminous skirt, and went her way, leaving the new and very inexperienced Sally to do her own introducing.

She saw Mrs. Terhune sitting in a deep rocking chair, and while Sally had often visited Mrs. Buckley, her mother had only lately come to live there, and she was therefore a stranger to Sally.

"You're Clara Perry's daughter, I understand," the old lady said a little sharply, "and my daughter, Mrs. Buckley (there was sarcasm in her voice now), has brought you to keep me company."

"Yes," Sally said, a little lamely, instantly

forgetting all the appropriate sentences she had thought up to meet the difficult occasion with.

"Well, just take off your things and make yourself at home," went on Mrs. Terhune. "But we may as well understand each other at the start. I don't want any spying and I don't need a nurse. I——"

A flash of anger spread over Sally at that insinuation.

"I'm not a nurse and I wouldn't spy on anyone," fired back Sally, standing there, undecided whether to stay or go back home. But the very next moment she knew she would stay, and was even smiling at her own indignation.

"I like your spirit," the old lady acknowledged, "so I guess we'll get along. Ring the bell and ask Susan to take your things to the room at the other end of the hall."

"The other end of the hall?" repeated Sally, surprised at being put so far away from Mrs. Terhune's room.

"Yes. Why not? Did you want some other room?"

"Not at all," smiled Sally now, trying to remember her boast to her own granny, that she would not oppose Mrs. Terhune, but would agree with her in everything. "I'll be

all right wherever you wish me to sleep."

"Well, that's a good room; they're all good rooms. Call Susan."

"Perhaps I can find my own way," Sally ventured, not wanting to encounter the sour Susan again.

"I said *call* her," ordered the old woman imperatively. Now how could any girl take to an old person with a temper like that?

But Sally marshaled her smile and went out in the dim hall to call Susan.

"Oh!" she exclaimed in surprise, bumping into the maid just outside the door. "Mrs. Terhune would like you to show me—my room," faltered Sally, aware instantly that the maid had been listening, had been as close to the door as she could get, and was, of course, surprised by Sally rushing out, for Sally usually rushed.

But not a word did Susan answer. Silent Susan was the name already picked out for her by the paid guest, for Sally was calling *herself* this—and even now wondering how long the pay would last if, as guest, she didn't soon manage to become a little more popular.

"But I'm going to stick it out," she was determining, as Silent Susan opened another door, this time into a round room on the very end of the big house, a room that showed up

most attractively as the pretty golden-globed lights were switched on.

"How lovely!" Sally exclaimed, forgetting for the moment that she just wasn't going to say one word to that sour Susan.

"It's nothing but draughts," muttered Susan, not even willing to agree that this lovely tower room was lovely.

But she went her way quickly enough, and Sally sighed a sigh of relief. She didn't like Susan. She could never trust a person who deliberately listened at keyholes. And when she, Sally, first entered Mrs. Terhune's presence, she was vaguely aware of some hidden sign passing between the two women, Mrs. Terhune and Susan. And Mrs. Buckley had told them that Susan had come to her upon reference from a friend of her mother's because her mother insisted upon having Susan with her, although she had never lived with Mrs. Terhune before.

As Sally unpacked her small bag in the lovely golden room, she began to put bits of such facts together. She recalled now that Cousin Margaret, that is, Mrs. Buckley, had often talked of her mother's peculiar liking for a very peculiar maid whom Mrs. Terhune had become acquainted with through some friends. And how she, Cousin Margaret, in

arranging to bring her mother to live with her, had also arranged to take on this maid. But not as a companion to Mrs. Terhune, for upon hearing Mrs. Buckley's story of her mother's deep interest in Susan, the new doctor decided it would be better to keep them separated by house duties, than to have the old lady lose her own independence by depending too much upon Susan.

So that was why she was not left with Mrs. Terhune when Cousin Margaret went away. The doctor had advised new company, Sally remembered Cousin Margaret had explained all that, and Sally was now being the new company.

"And I think I scent a mild sort of mystery. I think Sour Susan is either under Mrs. Terhune's thumb or Mrs. Terhune is under Susie's thumb," she was reasoning now. "And being under thumbs no matter whose they are, is very bad business."

Another tap at the door.

"Gosh!" thought Sally, "this is a regular door tapping affair. Come in!" she called out.

And it was Susan with a tray. "Mrs. Terhune sent you some tea," said the maid, meanwhile arranging the silver tray on the awaiting table. "She is not going downstairs again this evening."

"Oh," murmured Sally. Then: "Thanks. That's lovely, but I've had my tea."

Not that that made any difference to Susan. Not a word would she offer the strange and perplexed Sally, not so much as a comforting explanation of any thing, and Sally wondered if this maid was determining to make her as uncomfortable as possible. She was ready to leave the room.

"Just a minute, Susan," she called out to detain her. "I wonder if it is all right for me to be so far away from Mrs. Terhune?"

"Why not? She's all right. It's just her daughter's idea," Susan said, curling a very homely lip in and out as she spoke. Sally now noticed that her hair was dyed brown, but what of that? Many women who worked found it best to avoid gray hair. Susan was short, and queer looking, queer in ways one could not at once classify. She seemed all out of kilter, somehow, as if her various members belonged to different patterns, her legs being short and her waist being long. This gave her a grotesque appearance, which was accentuated by the long full skirt she wore, and the old-fashioned belted in waist. Sally expected her to trip at every step.

"But Mrs. Buckley told me to keep near her mother," Sally pressed, determined not to

let the cranky one throw her off her guard.

Susan turned and gave Sally, what she designated as "one look." It was one of those looks that have to be seen to be appreciated and Sally saw it. And of course Susan never said a word.

Exasperated, Sally turned away from the tray without touching a thing upon it, and squaring her fine young shoulders resolutely, she left the room and walked defiantly to that other door at the far end of the long hall. Of course, the door was closed and, of course, she was obliged to tap on it.

She waited. There was no response. She could hear Mrs. Terhune rustling about, but the old lady evidently was in no hurry to answer her knock. Sally tried again. A voice came this time, a peevish, irritated voice which called out:

"Whatever do you want now? Can't a body get ready for bed in her own room without a knock every minute?"

"It's I, Mrs. Terhune, Sally. May I come in a moment?" asked the girl at the door.

"Oh, it's you. Yes, come along. Another one to pester me——"

"But I won't bother you a moment, Mrs. Terhune," Sally replied, melting a little, for the tired, bothered look that had settled on the

face of the woman before her, was unmistakable, even to the inexperienced Sally. "Would you mind if I took the room Cousin Margaret told me to take?" Sally asked, her voice as gentle and kind as she could make it.

"Cousin Margaret?"

"Yes; that's Mrs. Buckley. You see, we are sort of alone, at our house, Mother and I and Granny, and Mrs. Buckley went to school with Mother. Also she is my godmother, so we have called her Cousin Margaret just to be—oh, you know—" smiled Sally. "We needed a Cousin Margaret."

The old lady was sitting in the inevitable rocking chair, straight up, not leaning toward any support. She pushed her glasses up over her forehead until they rested on her hair, meanwhile, with her eyes, measuring every inch of Sally.

"You needed a Cousin Margaret," she repeated. "Yes, I believe you. Lone women do need friends, and you're a likely little girl, although I was hoppin' mad at Maggie—at Mrs. Buckley," she corrected herself, "when she insisted upon getting someone to stay with me, extra. As if there isn't enough folks sneaking around this house." She stopped, pushed her chair back a little, and again adjusted her glasses over her eyes. "Well, take

any room you like so long as you don't bother me, for I'll stand no more bother."

"Oh, thank you," stammered Sally. "You see, I'm not used to being away from home, except with all the girls at camp, although I'm not the least bit timid."

"Whistling to keep up your courage," smiled the old lady, not unkindly. "'Taint no use bein' afraid of things in this world. When we have to face them, we can't stop to baby ourselves with nonsense. The thing to do is to go at it."

Sally stood there a moment, wondering. Elderly women have a queer way of saying things, but what they say usually has a perfectly plain meaning. No silly little words used just to show they know how to use them. No: this one thing Sally now saw clearly beneath old Mrs. Terhune's brusque manner. She *was* being annoyed by someone and she just wouldn't and couldn't stand any more of it. Was it Susan?

"I'll take the room right next to you here," Sally said pleasantly, "and if you should want anything, just call me. I'd like to help you, if you'll let me."

"Help me? Maybe you could and maybe you couldn't. But anyhow, get your tea. It's cold now, if you haven't taken it."

"It will be all right," smiled Sally, "I had my tea before I came. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"No, thank you," added Mrs. Terhune, a little hesitantly. "I try not to give bother, but an old woman gives bother just by living."

"Now, Mrs. Terhune, that isn't fair to Cousin Margaret. You know she's delighted to have you with her this winter," Sally reminded her.

"Oh, yes. Maggie's all right, and she's been a good daughter, but there's more in the family than Maggie. Good night, now, and run along. I'm tired and must—must read my verse," she finished by way of dismissing Sally, who had not only become interested in the old lady whom everyone called queer, but was actually becoming just the tiniest bit fond of her.

She liked her unflinching courage; and the way it looked out from the otherwise tired old eyes.

CHAPTER VII

THE NIGHT INTRUDER

WHAT did it all mean? There was some mystery between the Sour Susan and Mrs. Terhune; of that Sally was even now certain. And there was some good reason why Cousin Margaret did not want to leave her mother there with the servants, for certainly Mrs. Terhune was no invalid, and if she was queer it was a very cute queerness, the kind she chose deliberately to be queer about.

As Sally lay in the comfortable bed, and with her bedside light on looked critically at her rather luxurious surroundings, she secretly praised Cousin Margaret as a housekeeper.

"No, she's more of a homemaker," Sally corrected her thoughts. "Everything here bears the stamp of comfort and the label of good taste," Sally commented. "And I love the big blue parrots in those window hangings."

What girl does not love a pretty room? What girl does not love bright blue parrots

with pink wings and green heads and black claws? And a humped up beak that always looks like a bad cold in the head? Sally felt like laughing about that, when she remembered Adèle's last cold, that made her nose swell up and for which Adèle put on a mustard plaster! Pasted the mustard on her nose until it burned like sixty, then had to stay home from school to get rid of the mustard plaster cure. Certainly it helped the cold in her head, but how?

"Yes, those old parrots should have put on mustard plasters before they had their pictures taken," mused Sally. "And I think that palm tree is a glorified dogwood. I wonder why artists so love to picture things wrong?"

She lay there blinking at the interesting objects around her, but her mind went back unbidden to Susan and Mrs. Terhune. She remembered stories of poor, old dependent folks who were at the mercy of unscrupulous attendants, but somehow Mrs. Terhune was too wide awake to be under the dominion of others.

Then a sound like someone hurrying through the hall suddenly interrupted her thoughts.

"Who can that be?" she asked herself in surprise. "Everyone is in bed, but that's

someone in the hall. I wonder if I should peek out." A sense of responsibility urged her to investigate. Surely there could be or should be no one in that house except those she knew to be there. But still she hesitated and listened. Certainly someone was at Mrs. Terhune's door.

"I've got to find out," she quickly decided now, slipping out of bed, sticking her feet into her slippers and slipping her arms into her robe so quickly, that scarcely a moment elapsed before she stood behind her own door, her trusty little flashlight ready to shoot its glare into the dark hall outside.

Cautiously, noiselessly she shifted the bolt of her door, turned the knob and very, very gently opened the door the merest crack. She put her eye to that crack. There certainly was someone——

"Who's there?" she asked bravely. No answer. "Does someone want something?"

How she ever did it she could not afterwards decide, but she actually stepped out into the dark hall, knowing that none of the servants could be there to help her in an emergency, and not knowing what prowler might be there to provoke an emergency.

"Oh, who's there?" she demanded this time, for a figure moved, the figure of a man. She

could see his outlines now—he was a young man, and he wore some sort of uniform.

"Whom do you want?" she asked in a guarded voice, for certainly this was no burglar. He had drawn himself up like a soldier.

"And *who* are you?" the intruder asked in turn, for he had stopped and was staring at her, his hat pulled down but his head thrown back in evident and frank surprise.

"I'm—Mrs. Terhune's companion," Sally answered simply, all fear of a prowler having left her as she stood before this stranger. She, too, was not hiding her surprise.

"Companion?" he repeated under his breath. They were both speaking in whispers, somehow it seemed the right thing to do. "That's fine," he added in the cultured voice that betrays training. "I just stopped in to get some of my old duds—I left them here some time ago. It's a late call. Sorry I disturbed you."

Although he seemed determined to hide in the shadows of the darkened hall, Sally now saw that he was wearing an olive drab uniform, tightened around the ankles, a sort of loose blouse and a hat that couldn't possibly belong to the rest of the outfit. No, he should have been wearing a helmet.

"A flying suit," she thought. "And he has taken off the hood. However could a flyer get into Nelson?" But she had no notion of asking him any such question, for even now he was going toward the back stairway, waving one hand to her in a gesture that betokened silence, and giving her a rather attractive flashing smile as he hurried away. But he carried no bundle and she knew he had merely made up the story about his "athletic duds" as an excuse for his curious visit.

A moment later he was going down the back stairs, and Sally was still standing there looking after him in amazement. As she waited she saw the door of Mrs. Terhune's room open just a crack, saw the old lady's face peer out of that crack, then the door was closed again without a word having been spoken.

Sally wanted to laugh. What was this anyhow? Didn't people do anything else than open and shut doors on mysterious cracks in this lovely home of Cousin Margaret Buckley?

"Of course, it's because the folks are away," Sally reasoned. "That young man may be a friend of Peter's, for instance."

But the guess was too silly to be seriously entertained, because Peter, the chauffeur, occupied a room back of the kitchen on the first

floor, and no friend of his would have any business on the next floor. Then, too, it was not likely that Peter would have as a friend a gay young flyer. She had seen his features quite clearly although he tried to hide them. His soft hat had been pulled down and he managed to keep in the shadow, the only light being the "dimmer" that was kept on the dim in the hall all night. But his face was strikingly handsome, and Sally's romantic sense was at once aroused. Her own flashlight she had not attempted to train on the intruder, for somehow she sensed he was a well-bred young man, and he gave her the impression of being polite even under such absurd conditions. And wasn't it very romantic? A flyer in the second hall at midnight!

"The only thing missing from the scene," Sally tried to jolly herself by reasoning, "was Sour Susan. She should have come down the hall in her parachute nightgown, with hair in curl papers and all the rest of it." A few minutes later Sally was back in her room, but she did not turn out her light. There was no sleep for her now, at least not *just* now, for how did she know but a boy scout parade, or something equally impossible, might come trooping down the hall next, and

surely she wouldn't want to miss anything like that.

"But I was a wise little girl to leave that tower room away down by the winding stairway," she decided, "because that's a fine place for prowlers to prowl, and I don't care particularly for their company. Ho! Hum!" she sighed, "this is being away from home and Mother. And Granny," she added affectionately. "I suppose they are wondering what I'm doing and how the first night on my first job is coming off. Well, so far so good," she summed up mentally, "but the night isn't over yet."

The wind howled fiercely at her windows and there was no denying it, even Sally, the brave, was feeling lonely, if not actually timid. She wished she could have left the door open that led to the little wash place alcove, between her room and Mrs. Terhune's. Mrs. Terhune must be awake still—perhaps Sally should speak to her, ask her had she seen the strange young man in the hall, who said he had dropped in at that hour of the night for his athletic togs and who was wearing flying clothes.

She tiptoed to the door of the alcove and listened. Yes, Mrs. Terhune was moving

around, so why shouldn't she speak to her? She should. Tap again at a door! And even her anxiety did not cover that joke on door tapping. No answer. She tried once more.

"Well, what is it now?" came the gruff voice of Mrs. Terhune, and there was more shuffling about.

Sally opened the door carefully and still in her pink robe (Granny had insisted the pink was the prettiest), she entered the dark room.

"Did you hear anyone in the hall?" Sally asked cautiously.

"Hear anyone?" The old lady always answered a question by asking another. "I hear so many folks going about I pay no attention. Can't you sleep?"

"But I think there was someone here." Sally felt she should not be more definite, she might get the old lady all nervously worked up over it.

"Someone here? What harm is that? There's always folks going and coming. Are you afraid?"

"Oh, no, not afraid," scoffed Sally, convinced now that Mrs. Terhune had seen the young man but did not want to say so. "I just wondered if you wanted anything?" The room was still dark and it was weird to be talking to shadows.

"Poor child," sighed Mrs. Terhune quite unexpectedly. "I'm afraid Maggie dragged you away from your home, when you should be with your mother and your grandmother this very minute. But don't fret. No harm will come to you. I'll see to that. Just leave that door open and turn into bed. I'm not too old to take care of you, if there's any need of it; and I *am* old and queer and cranky. Go to sleep now and don't fret. Not a thing will bother you," concluded the old lady, mysteriously.

"Oh, I know nothing will bother me," Sally answered, rather surprised that the old lady would suggest such a thing. She really didn't know what to say. She was just dying to ask who the dashing young flyer might be, but something told her that Mrs. Terhune would not want to tell her. She had seen her peek out into the hall just as the stranger hurried from or past her door, Sally couldn't tell which he had done, but certainly Mrs. Terhune must have seen him.

"We mustn't let every little thing bother us," the old lady said now, in evident evasion. "Just go back to bed and leave the door open between."

But Sally said good night and thanked her simply and sincerely. And she made up her

mind then, that Mrs. Terhune was not the queerest person in that house, no matter what others said about her.

Bit by bit Sally pieced together the vague evidence of something there, unusual if not actually mysterious. Mrs. Terhune had been living in a town not far from her daughter's home, and Sally now recalled hearing Mrs. Buckley tell her (Sally's) mother, that she simply could not leave her alone longer, so it was much against Mrs. Terhune's wishes that she was brought to live with her daughter Margaret, Mrs. Buckley. But who was the young man who got in and got out of the house without calling anyone? Sally had never heard of any relative who might fit his description. His readiness to speak of athletic togs showed his familiarity with college affairs, and he acted somehow like a college boy, in the little bit of acting she was able to observe. He might be a student flyer, but that did not explain the intrusion. Naturally, Sally was interested in him. Wouldn't it be funny if he turned out to be some hidden relative who came and went by plane and kept his visits secret?

The absurd idea was too absurd to keep Sally awake longer. The door was on a crack between her room and Mrs. Terhune's, while

the door into the hall was properly bolted with the little brass bolt, all of which gave her a feeling of security, that likewise tended to give her a much needed chance to fall right off to sleep, which she promptly did.

It had been an adventuresome night for a beginning, but then most beginnings are full of adventures. Strange to say, that old wind howling around the house had done more to disturb Sally than the other and more significant happenings. As a rule, she loved to hear the wind whistle, and that may have been the very reason why she so hated to hear it to-night. While she was away from home, away from her mother and her dear granny, and to hear the wind howl made her think how pleasant it would have been to be listening to it in her own bed, in her own room, in her own home.

It was bright daylight, with a good strong sun at work making the world lovely, when she awoke next morning. And just as she had been dreaming, there really was someone knocking at her door.

"Come in!" she called, smiling at her own assurance that it wouldn't be some stranger she was inviting in.

It was Susan. "There's someone on the phone calling you, Miss Sally," said Susan,

now using her best manners as if they were a part of her day's work.

"On the phone?" Sally repeated. "Can I go down the hall in my robe?"

"Certainly. There's no one here but ourselves," Susan assured her. "The phone is in the sitting room at the left." Sally noticed that Susan's voice was restrained, but paid no attention to that.

"Oh, hello, Momsey," she was presently calling into the receiver. "Of course, I'm all right, fine. How are you and Granny?" A pause followed, while good news came forth. Then Sally continued: "Why should you be worried? One would think I had gone to a far-away country and I am only a few miles from home."

Then Sally's mother told her that her grandmother was coming around to see her early this very morning, and she asked Sally not to say anything about leaving school to any of her friends "just yet."

"Granny is calling here this morning?" Sally asked and answered in surprise. "But Mother, I may be busy. I don't know yet what I'm expected to do," she half objected.

But Mrs. Graves was insisting that it would be quite all right for her grandmother to call, and that Sally was pleased not to say anything

to anybody about leaving school. She was very definite about that.

"All right, Mother," Sally sort of sighed finally, feeling a sense of the old "leaving school" argument again looming up. "But tell Granny not to come too early. I'm only just out of bed and I haven't even spoken to Mrs. Terhune yet."

That point was then agreed upon, and presently Sally was hurrying with her dressing, anxious to get about whatever duties she might have been expected to assume.

"And I just know Mother and Granny are up to something to keep me from leaving school after all the fuss and worry. As if we hadn't fought that to a finish before I came here."

CHAPTER VIII

ALARM

HALF an hour later the quiet of the Buckley home was turned into tense anxiety. Mrs. Terhune was ill; she could scarcely be roused and Susan was insisting that no doctor be sent for.

"She's like that often," Susan was telling the frightened Sally, "and there's no need for a doctor at all. She'll just sleep it off."

"But that is not natural sleep," Sally argued. "Listen to her breathing. Oh, I'm so glad my grandmother is coming. She'll surely know what to do."

"No one will thank her for interfering," shot back the presumptuous maid. "I tell you it's nothing, and she'll be all right in a few hours. Probably her medicine went to her brain."

"Her medicine? What medicine?" Sally demanded to know.

They were standing by the bedside watching Mrs. Terhune struggle to get back her

consciousness. Certainly that was not sleep but some sort of stupor.

"Of course, old folks have to have medicine, although, I never gave her any and *I* don't know anything about it. But likely it's just something for her rheumatism," Susan answered, putting such emphasis on the personal pronoun I, as if to indicate her determination of taking no responsibility for Mrs. Terhune's condition.

Sally then wanted to ask Susan about the young man who had sneaked in during the night. Could he have had anything to do with this? But she decided it would be best not to go at that subject just yet. Perhaps she had better talk to her grandmother first. Oh, how she wished now that her grandmother would hurry! For she felt it was really dangerous to allow the old lady on the bed to lie there, breathing in that almost strangling way and not have a doctor or do something for her.

"But can't we do anything?" Sally pleaded with Susan. "Are you sure she is often exactly like this? Couldn't we try to wake her or something?"

"Now please don't get excited, Miss," begged Susan, showing more alarm at Sally's anxiety than over Mrs. Terhune's condition. "I've seen her this way many times and she

comes out of it before you know it. There's diseases that act like poisons, you know, and she isn't poisoned in any other way."

"Poison!" exclaimed Sally in genuine alarm. "Whatever do you mean, Susan?"

"See, she's waking now. Have a drink, dear?" she called loudly to the figure on the bed, that was stirring just a little now. "Wake up, do, and take a little drink for Susan," coaxed the maid, as if she were talking to a child.

But Sally didn't wait for a reply. Instead she hurried to the stand for a glass of water and quickly handed it to Susan. The maid put the glass to Mrs. Terhune's lips without attempting to raise her head, and after a moment or two the sleeper sipped just a tiny bit of the water and then sighed deeply, as if very, very tired.

"Oh, I'm so glad!" breathed Sally. "I was just frightened to death. This being my first day here, you know," she said to Susan, who really seemed a little more friendly, certainly more interested in Sally since Sally had shown such sincere interest in poor Mrs. Terhune.

"She's the best-hearted soul," said the maid, straightening the pillows and fussing about

the bed. "But folks just don't understand her, not even her own daughter, who is kind enough to her, I must say. But she has these spells and it always looks like drugs but it's just poison that brews in her own blood. I get cross with her sometimes, I must admit. And I try to keep her from getting excited. Excitement is very bad for her," Susan said definitely.

And Sally wondered if the young flyer's visit had given the excitement which had proved very bad for her, just as Susan said. If she had seen the young man, and Sally was sure she had, there was certainly some secret between them, and Mrs. Terhune's need for that secrecy was enough to excite anyone, young or old, Sally was quickly reasoning.

But Susan might not know anything about it. Sally wondered, but kept her own counsel, not feeling safe to even mention the subject.

"And you are sure we ought not call the doctor?" asked Sally again, relieved to see the improvement in Mrs. Terhune, but not certain that the danger was so quickly passed.

"They only upset her. There's a doctor out in Meadowbrook where we lived, but he's the only one that understands her case. See,

she's getting back to herself now, and don't worry. After a little more quiet sleep, she'll be as good as ever."

"And is that why Cousin Margaret, Mrs. Buckley, didn't want to leave her alone, without someone especially with her?" Sally asked, for surely Susan was there and Susan was caring for the sick old lady as tenderly as possible.

"Yes. Some big doctor here said she needed new company—" Susan scoffed as she said. "As if a woman nearly eighty years of age would be better or worse because of a strange face around her," sneered Susan, shrugging her shoulders disdainfully.

"But I hope I can help some," Sally faltered, feeling she wasn't doing much just then.

"You are all right, and you mustn't mind us if we act like cranky old women. We have enough to make us cranky sometimes," Susan complained, and Sally imagined she was speaking the exact truth. There were many things to make old folks cranky.

Just then the telephone rang and Sally took a message from her grandmother. She couldn't come over. The principal of the school Sally was so eager to leave, had asked Sally's mother to call to see him, and as she couldn't go, of course, the other mother would

answer the summons. Sally's grandmother could attend to any business as well as could Sally's mother, and when a school principal asked a mother to call as soon as convenient, she usually does so whether it is convenient or not.

Sally was too excited to argue. There was Mrs. Terhune sick, a stranger dropping in from an airplane, Susan acting as if she alone knew how to attend to the old lady, and Sally therefore feeling very much like an interloper. So she had to say "all right" to her grandmother, who was in a hurry, and who promised to call Sally up as soon as she got back from high school.

"But can't you drop around home this morning?" her grandmother wanted to know. "Won't you be out in the car, Sally?"

"No, I'm afraid not this morning, Granny," Sally made answer, not attempting to speak of Mrs. Terhune's condition in those few hurried minutes, or to explain why she couldn't go out in the car.

"But they just won't get me to go back to school," she was thinking as she left the phone. "This is my place until Cousin Margaret comes back, and I'm going to stick to it. Maybe Creeping Charlie will ask me to take a ride in his airplane," she was thinking

to herself, for tense as the situation seemed, Sally could find humor in it, and the old name of her childhood, Sally for Short, seemed especially appropriate now.

For Sally was more and more determined to make short work of the mystery of the big house in the maples.

Mrs. Terhune did rally, just as Susan promised, but Susan had many duties to attend to and Sally found herself left in charge of the patient.

"That's why you're here, I suppose," Susan rather sourly explained. "I can't attend to the upstairs work of this big house, attend to the calls and be nurse too."

"But Mrs. Buckley didn't say anything about my being a nurse either," Sally demurred. "Not that I mind doing anything I can, but I've never had the least bit of experience."

"Don't worry. If we should need a nurse I'm to call one in, but we won't. She'll be all right."

Sally looked rather doubtfully at the woman whose eyes were more often closed than open. She was better, but nothing like she had been in the evening when Sally came. Somehow the spell had changed her.

"Just be around and ask her to take a drink

once in a while. Peter had to attend to some business for Mr. Buckley and he isn't around, so there's only the cook and me to do the work," Susan explained. "But if you want me, just call me."

So this was the way women earned money; Sally had plenty of time to weigh that question, as she walked through the pleasant rooms or attempted to read a book, alternately watching at the bedside of the woman who Susan said was not sick exactly but very, very far from being well. "And a nurse; what a monotonous life hers must be," Sally thought. "I'd like any sort of hard work with real activity better than this concentrated watching and waiting. I hope she isn't going to be this way long." The prospect was alarming.

But she wasn't. Quickly as the spell of apathy had settled upon her, or almost as quickly, it left, and before that night Mrs. Terhune was up in her chair again, complaining of "a little headache," but not otherwise much worse for the experience which had so frightened Sally.

During the hours that followed, Mrs. Terhune didn't even mention that long, heavy sleep, and Sally was forced to believe that Susan must have been right about it. But

the thought persisted that the visit of the unknown airman must have had something to do with the sudden attack.

A number of times Mrs. Terhune started to say something, even once going so far as to ask Sally how she slept after she had spoken to her, but Sally could not ask her any direct question about the young man who went through the hall. Finally, just before she was ready to leave for home to spend the night there, Mrs. Terhune called her back into her bedroom.

"You know, little girl," she said cautiously, her tired eyes fixed with something of a stare upon Sally's face, "I have carried other people's burdens because I want to be useful. My daughter wants me to take it easy, as she calls it, and that is why she has insisted upon my coming here to live with her. She wants me to live the few years I have left in comfort."

"Cousin Margaret loves you dearly, I know that," Sally felt obliged to interrupt, for the old lady was finding it difficult to talk without resting.

"Yes. But young folks can't know how old folks feel. When you came here I didn't like it. I felt there would be one more person to watch me. Susan was that way at first but

she knows my ways now. I am hoping you will understand too, and keep a quiet tongue in your head." She stopped, closed her eyes, and as she lay back in the chair Sally tried to understand. She wanted to be useful, poor old lady, and even her daughter wanted her to stop doing things and to live her few years in, what the younger woman considered, comfort. Sally imagined her own grandmother like that, having her beloved work, whatever it might be, taken out of her hands. Certainly Sally would "keep a quiet tongue in her head."

"Mrs. Terhune," she said gently, "I want to help you, and I've been brought here by Cousin Margaret to do that."

"I know."

"And at the same time I must be faithful to Cousin Margaret——"

"You need not worry about the young boy you saw at my door last night," suddenly Mrs. Terhune said, completely surprising Sally. "He's all right, a dear friend of mine," she stopped to show how very dear she considered him. Presently she continued: "And he has a right to visit me any time he gets a chance."

"But he really wasn't visiting you, was he?" Sally could not help asking.

"He came to see me. It was late so he just left a message," Mrs. Terhune said, in such measured tones as to forbid any further questioning on that point. "But I want to ask you to say nothing about his coming. I assure you there is no harm in it. It is just one of those things that Margaret would not understand and it is my own private affair." She smiled, and Sally saw how she had changed toward her since the belligerent reception of the night before.

"You see, I am trusting you," she said, divining Sally's thoughts. "I like your folks and I like you. Don't be afraid you are making any mistake in taking my advice."

"Thank you, Mrs. Terhune," said Sally, feeling a great swelling sympathy for the old lady who was pleading the cause of her own personal freedom. To do what she wanted to do, to be in some way useful.

It was a real relief for Sally to go home that evening. Mr. Buckley had returned from the city and just as Mrs. Buckley had arranged, he offered "to look in occasionally" at Mrs. Terhune, and he, being tired from a business trip, was only too glad of the promise of a quiet night at home.

So Peter, the chauffeur, drove Sally to her home as soon as Mrs. Terhune had finished

her tea. And then there began once more that unavoidable discussion.

Wouldn't Sally be satisfied to attend school for certain sessions and allow her grandmother to take those intervals with Mrs. Terhune?

To object to that seemed like denying her grandmother the chance of helping, especially so since Mrs. Buckley would be sure to be satisfied. And how much better it would be, argued both mothers, than having Sally tied up for long hours with that irritable old lady?

But Sally had already grown interested in, if not actually fond of, the old lady at Maples, and could she risk upsetting her again by having another stranger attempt to understand her?

CHAPTER IX

DISILLUSIONED

AND just trying to earn money, just attempting to work had plunged Sally into all these complications.

"But, Sally dear," her grandmother was arguing in her lovable, gentle way, "why couldn't I sit there and perhaps read to her?"

"Granny darling," Sally interrupted, "you most certainly could. You could keep Mrs. Terhune company much better than I can." A sigh escaped her as she finished.

"Then why, dear," her mother spoke again, "why ever should you object?"

"Because, Mother, Mrs. Terhune is queer about strangers."

"And you imagine *you* could understand that queerness in one single night?"

"That is odd, isn't it?" Sally said, feeling more helpless at every sentence. "But I do sort of feel I understand her. And she asked me so pitifully not to interfere, to let her do what she calls useful things."

"Useful things? Who would object to that? Certainly not Cousin Margaret."

"Oh, dear," sighed Sally again, feeling strangely like shedding a few silly tears, "I just hate to oppose everyone so."

"Now there," spoke up the grandmother, "don't you fret any more. You just carry out your own plans and I'll go back and explain to your principal, Mr. Brady. He's very reasonable, and his efforts are, of course, in your interest, Sally dear. He made the periods of study at home and those of attendance at school to fit in with the schedule your mother and I thought you could manage. Naturally, he does not want to have a promising pupil leave school in the middle of a term."

Thus it was that Sally's brief experience with what she called her job, had actually changed her from the happy school girl of the very day before, to a serious thinking young lady of to-day, who felt obliged to face the problems of human wants in a way utterly new to her. Yes, it was only experience, not theory, that counted, and the experience of a single night had thrust upon her a new and exacting responsibility. Both her mother and her grandmother were obviously much surprised at the change in her. Her mother

resented it. Why should her little Sally be called upon to reason like a woman? Her grandmother wondered, but with her unlimited confidence in her Salva, she hesitated to force Sally further. After all, she was reasoning, wasn't Sally old enough to know? Had not she a right to follow the lines in her own way, since her mother had already agreed to let her undertake them?

"It's just the queerest thing," faltered Sally. "It seems so many people in this world are trying to help others to do things they just don't want to do."

"But you are young, dear," her mother persistently pointed out.

"And Mrs. Terhune is old," added Sally quickly.

"And can't you see, dear, that both young and old need advice?"

It seemed so, but Sally was inclined to be headstrong, if not actually stubborn, and she could not see why folks had to be so pestered even with the best intentioned advice. How could she know that in the back of her mind the spirit of adventure was working above everything else? She wanted to know what it was that Mrs. Terhune was doing "to be useful," that Mrs. Buckley would have opposed had she known. It certainly was some-

thing concerning the unknown airman, and Sally could not repress her curiosity about him. Every time she heard a distant plane whirr she wondered if Creeping Charlie (silly name, for he didn't creep and he couldn't be a Charlie)—she wondered when she heard a plane if he were in it. Was he a pilot or maybe a wireless operator? She knew a wireless man from an airship, from one of the big ocean flying ships. That is, he had visited the high school laboratory and the pupils then at class there had been introduced to him. Wouldn't it be great if Sally's airman turned out to be someone worth while? Suppose he should give her a ride in his plane some day?

All of these and many more possibilities were secretly pricking at Sally's mind, as she at last got her mother to agree to her sticking to her original plan and staying with Mrs. Terhune, without the help of a substitute.

But she was mighty glad to sleep in her own bed again, although she had only been out of it one single night; but such a lot seemed to have happened in that one single night that time had changed its character.

The girls, Adèle and Eleanor, had telephoned in the evening, of course. They would not give up in their efforts to keep Sally at

school, especially with the big basketball game approaching. Adèle teased and teased, while Eleanor seemed inclined to consider Sally something of a hero. But when Mary got her call in after the other girls had held the wire for an unbelievable long time, she simply advised Sally not to mind about the girls who so wanted her to stay at school, but to do as she thought best herself.

"And take it from me, Sally," Mary wound up briefly, as Mary was apt to do, "you'll find out soon enough whose advice you should have taken. We always do find out when the chance to make good use of advice is past and gone."

"At any rate," Sally had answered, "it's nice to be popular and all these phone calls to-night are surely proving me that." So the last call ended.

Then came the days, the long days and equally long evenings when the telephone calls dwindled, when Sally felt left out of things, and when she fully realized what it meant to have left school. There were few exciting occurrences at Mrs. Buckley's now. Susan maintained her stolid indifference to Sally's attempted advances of friendliness, and even Mrs. Terhune was often irritable, and she wouldn't care to talk, except in

streaks, and then she didn't care to stop!

"Earning money is not so easy after all," Sally concluded, more lonely than anything else. "But when my month is up—and Cousin Margaret may be back before the month—" she told herself hopefully, "then I'll have fifty dollars and maybe *then* I'll be able to start in business in the old mill toy shop."

This idea always intrigued her. To run a tea shop, to sell antiques, to have shelves and cupboards filled with interesting things, wouldn't that be wonderful? Sally tried to keep all this in mind during those long tiresome days, and even during the nights when she was occasionally called upon to stay with Mrs. Terhune. No, she didn't like this "job." It was dull and dreary to stay indoors when she knew all the other girls were enjoying life in the brisk autumn, with its glorious changes in color, in weather, in wet and in dry days and nights, when things mumble together in a queer kind of fun that always tumbles over itself before winter clamps his foot down.

But none of this for Sally. Just old women, for Susan was old and and the cook was old and certainly Mrs. Terhune was old. And all for fifty dollars, all the fun, all the school days, the basketball games—the club had gone

out of town twice already, and Sally had pretended to be content to wave them good luck, as they passed in the buses.

Still she would not complain. Why should she? Hadn't she begged for this chance? Hadn't she been anxious to give up everything to earn money? But how could she have known it would be as dreary, as monotonous as this?

Having assured herself of Sally's loyalty, Mrs. Terhune settled down to her endless knitting, while Sally answered her letters to Mrs. Buckley, made out her charitable work checks and held them for her to sign—she was rather rich, Sally had come to know, and sent out a lot of checks to organizations. Besides this, Sally darned stockings and how she loathed that job!

Mrs. Buckley had also written Sally, telling her how pleased she was that Sally could stay at Maples during her own absence, and expressing the satisfication that her mother, Mrs. Terhune, had in her turn written to Mrs. Buckley. Certainly, Mrs. Terhune must have been pleased, according to Cousin Margaret's report. But letter writing is never entirely satisfactory; so many little points are sure to be overlooked. For instance, Sally would have loved to have known

just when Cousin Margaret was coming home, but she didn't say.

On such nights as she was allowed to remain home, nights when Mr. Buckley might not be so busy or out of town, Sally found so many little things to do for herself that she did not try to go to the girls' homes or to have them come in to see her. Of course, her mother objected to this drudgery, but as usual Sally won out, and she would remind her mother that it wasn't going to last forever.

Poor Sally! The girl who outdid all her companions in high spirits, high resolves and high purposes had, in so short a time, become utterly disillusioned. Earning money, feeling independent, which was, after all, a manner of pampering her own vanity, had cost her a price far beyond what she could have expected to pay. But her mother had told her, warned her, pleaded with her; had pointed out the cost of that precious fifty dollars, which would soon be due from Cousin Margaret. The girls seldom called her up now; they believed her too busy to bother with them, and as for asking her to go off on one of the bus rides, always a lark for the high school girls and boys, and probably for their teachers as well, after her first

excuse—it was one day that Mrs. Terhune had become interested in a book Sally was reading to her—after that, even kind and thoughtful Mary had not ventured to interrupt Sally again. The best of friends have their limitations.

How she missed the girls! How long the days were! She wondered hourly what they were doing just then, if Adèle were going to Julia's party (Sally had declined too early, she was sorry now), and if Eleanor had obtained permission to go away two days before school would close at Thanksgiving, to attend her cousin's house party, an event all Eleanor's close friends shared with her in the preparations thereof. In fact, Sally for Short found herself living in a world of wondering, guessing, hoping, and she did not like it at all. What healthy, normal girl would?

But she did not complain, not Sally. Mrs. Buckley would be back soon, and then her exile would be over. Every morning when she stepped up on that lovely porch, when Peter had brought her in the car from her home, something like a shudder ran over her.

Another day!

And another and another!

The world of work was nothing like the world of play, and although there was seri-

ous work in high school, girls grew into that naturally, and its hours were pleasantly broken by companionship and exercise and recreation. The fact was, Sally had plunged herself into the restrictions of being a companion to an old and fussy woman without the slightest preparation for such work. She might as easily have chosen to play basketball by reading in a book about the game. Theory is always one thing and experience quite another. Her mother had known; her grandmother had known; but she, she had been so cocksure, so conceited, so proud of her ambition, and she had made a mistake. They could have managed without that fifty dollars but how could she manage to get back in study with her class where she had been a month ago? How again become a part of the happy circle to which earning money was still a matter of theory?

Sally did not yet know that what was hurt most was her pride, the very pride that had prompted her to go on, almost recklessly, and was now torturing her with further foolish fears.

She confided in her grandmother, admitted she had made a mistake. That after all she didn't want to leave school, and that her mother had been right, although, of course,

Sally still hated to admit that in being right her mother should have to take orders for silk stockings.

It was all so confusing. One hour she was joyfully counting the prospective fifty dollars planning to do something wonderful for her mother with it. The next she would be fretting about the more difficult studies at high school and wondering how she could make up the lost time. All of this was so unlike Sally, and she did not know why.

She was at home after a day of dire monotony, sitting in the living room, she and her beloved granny, while as usual, her mother was in her own room marking samples. Mrs. Graves always tried to keep the evidence of her business hidden behind the kind little door of her own particular room,

"Don't think I'm whining, Granny," Sally talked on, "but it isn't all as jolly as I thought it would be. This one month has seemed like a year."

"Don't worry, Sally for Short," replied the grandmother, pressing the endearing term into use to show she had not given up the little girl that name had been coined for. "You are doing wonderfully well, and you will be sure to find your pot of gold at the

end of the rainbow, when the rainbow emerges after the storm."

"But, Granny dear, I'll have to start day and night work to get back into class if I go. This was such an important month," murmured Sally.

"You won't complain about that?"

"No, I won't complain. I'm not silly enough to imagine I can hold on to school while I'm working. But think of the thousands who only get high school after working hours, how *they* study at night."

"And always turn out well worth while because they know the value of what they are getting," the grandmother interrupted her.

"Oh, yes," agreed Sally, "some of our honor scholars are always from the evening high."

"Yes," answered her grandmother gravely. Then she stopped, took her glasses off, which gesture was always a prelude to something important, threw back her fine head with its neatly trimmed and prettily waved hair—a natural wave and a becoming bob even for a grandmother. Then she smiled reassuringly.

"You are still a little girl, Sally," she said indulgently, "and I am afraid what I am saying sounds old-fashioned and preachy. But try to understand."

Sally nodded and would have kissed her, but for the interruption.

"You have made an important discovery. No one could tell you—you had to find out for yourself. Each step we take in life, from one point to another, is always marked with disappointment. That is bound to follow the first glare of an interesting change. This disappointment we old folks call the adjustment period, and when you have weathered that you find yourself back again in the period of interest."

"You mean I only imagine all this?"

"It amounts to that. You have found the small things a bother and the big show-off heroic matters are lacking in our everyday affairs. But don't you realize the really big and heroic thing you are doing? You went to work to help your mother. The work you are doing for Mrs. Terhune in bringing something sweet into an almost empty life—a life that the years are draining of pleasure. Can't you see, my dear, how fine that is?"

"Yes," sighed Sally, reluctantly.

"Then watch for your pot of gold at the end of your rainbow, for it is sure to be hanging on."

CHAPTER X

BIG PROSPECTS

HER grandmother, as usual, had known exactly how to cheer Sally. Grandmothers do, because they usually have more confidence in girls, whereas mothers still regard them as mere babies and worry accordingly. Their talk could not avoid that preachy tone, try as the grandmother (Mrs. Perry was her name, remember?) might to talk to Sally in a girl's way, it was, after all, a grandmother's way, but Sally liked it.

"A pot of gold at the end of my rainbow," she repeated next day, while dragging out that tiresome old bag of stockings that needed endless darning. "I wonder will my handsome airman bring the pot of gold?"

Ever since that night of romance, Sally had been picturing the airman as being handsome. He had a face of such striking features, with those big dark eyes and such flashing white teeth, that Sally was constantly recalling just how he looked. She could never forget how

his smile lighted up his whole face. And she wondered when she would see him again. As the days grew nearer to Mrs. Buckley's home-coming, a little fear that she might not see him again was creeping upon her. She had kept his secret, had not even mentioned his queer call to Susan or to Mrs. Terhune, and certainly not to the folks at home. Shouldn't he at least thank her for that?

She was sitting with Mrs. Terhune this afternoon—the old lady was explaining the numberless stockings—they were for her missionary society.

"And I suppose you will be glad to be free," she remarked to Sally. "It hasn't been pleasant to be indoors so much."

"I haven't minded it," Sally answered politely.

"But it hasn't been necessary," Mrs. Terhune went on. "After that one spell, I've been pretty well. I guess that scared you, didn't it?"

"It did a little," admitted Sally, sticking her finger with the darning needle and making a sour face over it.

"Well," Mrs. Terhune pursued in an almost tantalizing drawl, "it was excitement that caused that."

"Excitement?"

"Yes. The young man who called so late. I love the boy and would do almost anything for him, but then again, there are his own folks to consider. *They* might not think *I* was helping him."

"He has not called since, has he?" Sally asked with great indifference, paying a lot of unnecessary attention to the sock that was already properly mended.

"No, but I'm expecting him any day, for Roger is a boy of his word and he promised to come back before the end of the month." The old lady looked out of the window as if actually expecting his coming.

"It's the twenty-first now," said Sally, very, very casually, just as if Mrs. Terhune really wanted to know.

"Yes; he'll be here soon, if he can make it. If not, he'll write."

"Will he come at night as he did before?" ventured Sally.

"That depends. He's very proud and would not want to run into Tom, Mr. Buckley, you know." Mrs. Terhune was getting quite talkative and Sally was getting some much desired information.

"How would he know about Mr. Buckley being at home?" pressed Sally.

"There's Susan. She writes to him. She

was a maid in his family and she idolizes Roger."

"Oh, I see," said Sally. "Susan was a maid in his family?"

"Yes. But they've lost a bit of money and Susan was let go. But she is very fond of Roger. She would have helped him herself but for her sister. Her sister has been sick in a sanatorium and Susan pays for her. There now, you've heard a lot of gossip. But you know, Sally, as I told you at first, it's best to keep our business to ourselves."

Sally had no idea of discussing Mrs. Terhune's affairs with anyone, but she saw now why the young airman had stolen in so mysteriously. Mrs. Terhune was helping him financially, and he didn't want either his own folks or the Buckleys to know it. That was the missing link that tied up all three interests.

"And maybe he'll come again while I'm here," Sally silently pondered, making her fingers fly in and out of the hated darning, even the one that had just been stuck by the old needle.

Among other peculiarities of old people, Sally had lately learned, was that of their secretiveness. She simply did not dare press Mrs. Terhune for a more complete explana-

tion of this most interesting subject, for it was plainly none of Sally's business. Yet how simple it would have been for the old lady to add a few more remarks that would make plain where the young man lived, if he were at college, why should he let an old lady help him, when his own folks might have done so, and all that?

"I suppose I'll learn patience," Sally was trying to assure herself. "Granny always warned me that I needed to learn that."

Sally was at home that evening when Mary phoned her. She wanted to talk to Sally and was coming over no matter how busy Sally was. And Mary was welcome. To prove it, Sally impulsively threw her arms around her school chum, and told her frankly she was good and sick of her job.

Mary gave Sally a reassuring hug and returned the compliment by telling her frankly that the girls were all good and sick of Sally's job, too, and were clamoring to have Sally give it up and come back to school.

"But there's one thing we are not going to take any excuse for," Mary stated positively, as they settled down for a good old talk, Sally even laying aside her mending. "You've just got to come on the next bus ride to the Airways. We're going out, the whole

lab. class, next Friday to look over a ship that landed from Europe last week. You've just got to come along, Sally."

"To the Airways at Lakeport?" Sally asked eagerly.

"Yes. We went two weeks ago but there was no big ship in then. This big one will be worth seeing."

"I'll love to go," Sally quickly replied, "and I imagine Mrs. Terhune will be glad to get rid of me for the afternoon. I've been sticking too close to my job to suit her. But I feel I must at least stay there until Cousin Margaret comes back. She'll be back next week, I hope."

"Goody!" Mary exclaimed. "And I'm so glad you can come on the bus ride. We have a lot of fun down there and the airships are awfully interesting, of course."

"They certainly would be to me," Sally said, enjoying her own secret joke, but not feeling free to tell Mary why.

Then they talked of the big basketball game, Mary betraying the hope of having Sally get back to school in time to go in training to play in her usual place as guard. And new clothes! It was just the time of year to get new coats for winter, new hats and all

the other bright pretty things so dear to the hearts of girls like Sally and Mary.

"But it's a funny thing," Sally confided, "I'd rather not get a new coat this year. Just earning money gives me an interest to saving it."

"Your green coat is lovely; I shouldn't think you would want a new one," Mary agreed, understandingly. "That beaver collar is wonderfully becoming to you, too."

"Well, it's wonderfully warm at any rate," Sally added, "and that's the main thing in winter. Yes, Mary," she went on, "I wouldn't wonder but that I'll turn into a miser after this experience. It isn't that the work is hard——"

"Not hard enough for you, I imagine," her chum interrupted. "That's the trouble. These pesky little jobs all have to be done, but there's no glory in them, so we all hate them. Why don't you get a job at shoveling in coal? *That* might give you enough chance for muscular exertion, second only to golf and basketball," wound up Mary, teasing the girl who plainly couldn't get work hard enough for her.

"And you know Adèle is going to have an operation on her throat?" Mary informed Sally, who was very much out of things lately.

"When? I didn't know she was going to the hospital soon."

"Yes. She has sore throats all the time, so she's decided to go next week. We were all hoping she could put it off until after Thanksgiving, but it seems not. And Julia is going to give another big party; whatever would we all do without Julia's parties?" Mary wondered. "But anyhow, Sally, so long as you can go with us to the air field, we'll be happy," she was concluding, picking up her purse, preparatory to leaving.

"I wouldn't miss that for worlds," Sally exclaimed unexpectedly.

"Why, Sal! Not in love with an airman, are you? Your eyes look rather suspicious, if you really want to know," teased Mary.

"In love with an airman!" Sally laughed. "Wherever would I meet an airman? Did you ever see a plane parking around here?"

"Can't say that I did. But sometimes airmen actually ride in autos or even walk," joked Mary, now really ready to go.

"Or even crawl or creep or run," put in Sally, unable to deny herself that joke, although she could not share it with Mary.

After that her dreams ran wild. Would it be possible that the boy called Roger would be at that field? What a thrill to be with the

girls and have him come up to speak to her? But would he know her, remember her from that fleeting glance in the darkened hall? Certainly she would know him, his dark eyes, the way he cocked his head to one side in answering a question, but above all, that flashing smile over his sparkling teeth.

"Whew!" Sally whistled now, after Mary had gone and Sally was picking things up, "this does seem serious. Imagine me finding some boy as perfect as all that?"

But a shadow fell, taking the glitter off the "pot of gold at the end of her rainbow." Could any boy be really honorable, and therefore interesting, who stole into houses at night and borrowed money from old ladies?

This was not an easy matter to reason out, and Sally deliberately put it so far back in her mind that its head could not stick up and tantalize her. At any rate, she was determined to have a good time at the air field, and both her mother and grandmother were delighted when they heard she was going.

"And you should have some nice new clothes," her mother urged.

"Mother!" warned Sally.

"But you should. Why can't you be sensible and just take your fifty dollars—I'll advance it to you—and buy a good coat?"

"Mother Graves!" again Sally interrupted. "Do you think for one minute I'd spend that precious fifty on a mere coat?"

"Why not? You have earned it."

"I guess that's why. Say, folks," she began, stretching herself out full length until her feet threatened to break loose, "I'm going to be so stingy with that precious fifty, I imagine I'll just put it in a bag and sit holding that bag for the rest of my life. No, sir. I don't spend that money for a coat, Momsey dear. Rather, I think, I'll wear the green coat with renewed affection. I always *did* love that coat." She was being facetious.

"And it looks very well on you, Sally love," the grandmother interposed. "I don't blame you at all for using it another year. And you just tell Lady Terhune that I'll be over there Friday to spend the afternoon with her, and the evening and night too, if she wants me."

So it was arranged. And Sally was foolishly all a-flutter with expectancy, for she had a feeling that her airman would be around that field.

"Suppose he is. But suppose he gets the afternoon off and comes to Buckleys' while *I'm* away. Wouldn't that be awful?"

But since no one girl can be in two places at one time, she had to take that chance, and

for the few days intervening, Sally found lots more pleasant things to think of than the old stocking bag, reading stale magazines or pouring out "cambric tea."

Her next night home found Sally, as her mother said, dragging out every hat in the house trying to get one to make over for the bus ride to the air field.

"I'd so like to have one of those little helmets with the petticoat down the back of the neck," she was telling her grandmother. "I know I could cut one out of a hat with a good brim."

"What about your mother's green hat?" the grandmother reminded her. "That has a brim."

"Exactly!" Sally jumped up and ran to her mother's closet, calling out as she went that she was simply going to slaughter her mother's green hat into a clever little helmet.

"You like that model, dear?" Mrs. Graves asked. "Don't you think it is rather too close to the head to be comfortable?"

"Oh, no, Momsey. I just love the little petticoat at the back of the neck. You know that style is modeled after the airmen's helmet," exclaimed Sally, who was already slashing the green hat, getting it ready for the slaughter.

"The airmen's helmet?" repeated her mother, who had paid little attention to airmen's attire, since they did not wear silken things, such as she was especially interested in.

"Look!" demanded Sally, who had clamped the green bowl of a hat on her sleek head and was pinning the petticoat on at the back of her neck. "Just pin this tuck in here for me, Granny. I want it tight at the center back."

Her grandmother's deft fingers quickly followed instruction.

"I think that's just dear, Sally," she stood off to admire. "Look, Clara," to Mrs. Graves, "isn't our girl a genius at making hats?"

"At making over hats, I do think she is," the mother in turn admired. "What I think is most becoming, is that curve around the face. Like Joan of Arc, isn't it?"

"Oh, yes, *she* wore a helmet," Sally declared, still enthusing over the new creation. "And if there had been airships in her day, I'm sure she would have been a flyer; no, a pilot," corrected Sally. "There, that's just right. Now, I'm all ready for the trip to the air field," she finished, throwing her long arms out in mock imitation of the flying wings of a plane.

CHAPTER XI

ON THE AIRWAYS

THE bus ride to the Airways was a lot of fun, and one could well depend upon the high school crowd to get all possible fun out of it. The car was literally packed with the youngsters, girls and boys, and Sally was being made quite a hero of by her own crowd, while a few, just a few of those who always held off of the usual, held off now in the welcome to Sally Graves.

"You know when to come back all right," Ted Warren told her. "How's the sick old aunt?"

"She's well," replied Sally promptly; "thanks to my excellent——"

"My eye!" interrupted Ted, in the best of humor. He was always in good humor and always a favorite, although his hair was light and his eyes were blue. But Ted couldn't help that. He played on the basketball team and was counting on giving the girls' team his very best, in the way of a "good licking" at the coming big game.

"Hey, there, Sal!" called out Julia, who was in a front seat; that is, she was in the vicinity of a front seat but by no means sitting on it. "You behave yourself and see that you be good down at that airport. Your hat looks as if you expected to go up."

"I do," sang back Sally, who was also near a seat but certainly not on it.

"You do, eh?" challenged Ted. "Whom do you know at the airport?"

"Oh, a nice boy, a pilot," continued Sally, just joking but making up an interesting story while she was about it.

"Honestly, Sal! Do you know a pilot?" Eleanor wanted to know, Julia wanted to know, and even quiet little Alice, who hardly ever spoke above a whisper; *she* wanted to know.

"Honestly I do," Sally replied, "but I'm not sure he'll be at the air field *this* afternoon."

"Oh, I see," Ted chimed in, while he was trying to make a fat girl mad by kicking at her far-spreading ankles, and he didn't have to try very hard. She was up in the air now, as far as she could get in that crowd, and a shower of peanut shells was making for Ted's blue and blinking eyes. That started something, and a peanut shell fight held sway for some time after that, and it certainly was

surprising how many of the girls and boys "were loaded" with the ammunition.

Sides were formed and the battle raged, while the big bus rattled on. Even the two teachers who were along, Miss Alcott and Mr. Fallon, succumbed to the temptation and joined in the fray.

Shouts rang out, everyone declared his or her eye "was blinded," but somehow no one fell out of the lines, until finally the peanut shells gave out, by being crushed beyond further use, even if scooped up from pockets, caps, hat rims, and other points of salvage.

"It was a fine fight while it lasted," breathed Sally, who, perhaps as much, if not more than all the others, had enjoyed the fun.

"Yes, but you were just going to tell me about that pilot," Ted pressed. "Truly, Sal, do you know one? I'd like to."

"Sure you would," retorted Sally. "Well, just hang around, Ted, and if he's there I'll introduce you."

And then she was in for it. Arriving at the airport the big bus emptied its unruly but happy passengers, and in a short time all the spirit of disorder was reversed, as the class settled down to attend to that business it was there for.

Miss Alcott and Mr. Fallon had no trou-

ble whatever in assembling their units, so that the boys were in one group and the girls in another.

The great open field looked like a plain with its smoothed out surface, and smoother runway, a track probably one hundred feet wide down which the planes were run as they took off. The big hangar was built at the side of the port, and toward this the class for inspection was being led. Some small planes, the type used to take passengers on short trips, were now in the field. There was also a Ford monoplane, much larger than the others, and upon this some men were working up in the wings.

"Whatever are they doing up there?" Julia wanted to know, *they* being the only workmen in sight.

"Looks as if they are laundering the wings," ventured Sally, making a much shrewder guess than she knew, for that was exactly what they were doing.

"No passengers around this afternoon," remarked Eleanor. "I'm afraid, Sally, you will have to postpone that flight of yours. Unless," she added, pulling an absurd face, "some pilot will make a trip for just you."

"Wouldn't you come?" joked Sally.

"*I*—would not!" exclaimed Eleanor. "A

plane may be as safe as an auto, but I like to scramble for mine, and I can't see myself scrambling in the naked blue."

This opened up all sorts of opinions from all the girls who could hear what was being talked about, until presently they were over at the hangar. Within this gigantic building, made like a tremendous metal shell, was another big Ford plane, one that had lately come in from Boston and was now regarded as sort of huge high line trolley car, that could float without any trolley. The pilot, in his natty uniform, complying with company regulations, seemed most willing to explain the machine and its complications, to which the classes listened with at least pretended interest.

As there was a national contest on for an essay on the subject of the modern airplane, those of the high school class best fitted to write were busy with pencils and notebooks; among them Sally.

"So glad to have you with us to-day, Sally," Miss Alcott made a chance to tell her. "I know *you* are going to give us a fine essay."

"Oh, I don't know anything at all about planes, Miss Alcott," Sally answered her frankly.

"But you are interested and anxious to

learn," the teacher pointed out. "That's the infallible sign."

Julia couldn't see anything to take notes on. She jokingly whispered to Eleanor that her idea of a prize essay was a nice big picture of a nice big plane, cut out of a highly colored magazine and pasted on a big sheet of paper.

"Description of that ship is beyond me," she admitted, making a few more silly pencil strokes to the very silly drawing in her notebook, that she was wasting her time with. "Call it a bird and be done with it," she advised.

But Sally was looking things over with real interest and a critical eye. Perhaps her prolonged rest from studies found her more keen for the fray. Certainly, it was great to be back with the class again, and free from persistent call of Mrs. Terhune's little bell.

When the teachers had asked the pilots all the questions they could think of, and when the students had finished with their pages of notes, a few minutes were allowed to look around.

"You may roam around at will now," Mr. Fallon made known. "But look out you don't cut any ropes. The airships and planes just love to fly."

As usual the little knots of friends grouped

together, Ted coming to join Sally and Eleanor, while the others darted off in every direction, intent upon their own personal investigation.

"Let's go over there and see what those men are doing on the wings of that plane," Sally suggested. She was feeling a sense of disappointment at finding no trace of her airman. In spite of herself she had hoped she would see him about that field.

Approaching the larger plane upon which the men were at work, Eleanor commented upon their grimy appearnce.

"They must be laborers," she said. "Look at their pails. They're just scrubbing those huge wings by hand."

"Some job," Ted added. "I shouldn't like to tackle one of those flippers on a time contract."

Sally didn't say anything. They were now close to the big Ford ship and they stood there, watching.

"Imagine scrubbing that," Eleanor repeated.

Just then one of the men stopped his work and looked down. He seemed to be pleasantly greeting them, without saying a single word. But with an extra slosh of the sponge

and a flap of the water it carried, he went on merrily with his task.

"This is one of the big—" Sally spoke rather loudly, and at the sound of her voice the young workman stopped, stood up straight and looked down at her.

"Oh, hello there!" he called out, and she knew him instantly, just as he had known her voice.

"Your pilot!" exclaimed Eleanor, jokingly, for the young man in the dark overalls, with his face smudged, looked like anything other than a pilot.

He was climbing down, still holding the queer black bunch of something he had been scouring the wings with.

"What luck!" he exclaimed, without the least show of embarrassment at his unusual appearance. "I've been wanting to get out to Maples, but this job has got to be done." He didn't seem to mind it, but was short on time.

"Roger," began Sally in the tone of introduction, "this is Eleanor Bates and Ted Warren."

"Hello, Roger!" Ted called out as Eleanor smiled acknowledgment. It didn't matter at all that Roger had not been given a last name. "What's that you're working with?"

The instant friendliness both boys struck up saved Sally. She didn't know Roger's last name, but with the boys talking about the process of cleaning the great wings of a Ford plane no one had noticed the omission.

"This is mineral wool," Roger was explaining, "and we have to get the oil and dust off the wings by using lots of elbow grease," he informed them.

"Dust?" questioned Eleanor. "Don't tell us it is dusty up in heaven too!"

Roger laughed and flashed those wonderful teeth. Sally was proud of him in spite of the first disappointment. Even if he were scrubbing the wings of a plane, he was handsome; he was jolly. Ted had instantly taken a liking to him, that was certain, and as for Eleanor! Sally had no fears for Eleanor's opinion of her friend, for Eleanor's blue eyes were giving her away that very minute.

"The dust comes from the Airways on the take-off," he explained. "This boat has got to be ready to-morrow morning, for a sail to Canada."

"Are *you* going?" Sally asked. She hoped she wasn't blushing.

"Not this trip. I'm just earning money now; pleasure is out." He tossed the wad of mineral wool into one of the pails that stood

by his ladder, straightened up his fine shoulders and assumed an air of general defiance, when he spoke of earning money. And just then, Sally thought he was handsome as a young Greek god.

"When are you coming out to Mrs. Terhune's?" she ventured next. "She spoke about you yesterday. Hoped you'd come soon."

"I had planned to go out to-day, but one of the men didn't show up so the rest of us had to make up for him. Let me show you the interior, the car——"

"Oh, no," objected Sally. "Some other time. We've got to get in that bus and you've got to finish——"

"Scrubbing," he helped her out. "You have no idea what fine exercise it is. And the contract! Well, this contract is worth a lot of money, and I'm glad I got work on it." In spite of his careless manner, he seemed to be saying this to Sally with some especial intention, and she sensed he meant her to tell Mrs. Terhune he was earning money to pay back a loan, possibly.

Ted could hardly be dragged away, he was so interested in the big plane, and plainly interested in Roger and his work. He asked all sorts of questions, until finally the girls

started off ahead, knowing he would have to follow them.

"Sally!" exclaimed Eleanor, quickly as she could do so safely. "He's a perfect peach!"

"Like him?"

"Like him! No wonder you have had a mysterious interest in the airport. You are bound to win the essay prize with him to inform you."

Ted was calling to them and now came running up.

"Hey, there!" he shouted. "Isn't this great? I'm going out when Roger's job is finished and he's——"

"Not going to take you up, Ted?" Eleanor interrupted.

"Why not? I'm insured. Say, Sally, he's the first real airman I've ever had a chance to know."

"Doesn't look much like Lindy now," laughed Sally, in a merry little chant.

"Hey! Hoo-hoo! Sally!" Roger was calling, and he too was running after the small group that had started across the field.

"I thought so," joked Ted. "Go ahead, Sally. He's got something special to say to *you*. Wait for him; we'll toddle along."

And Sally waited while the others strolled discreetly on.

CHAPTER XII

LOSING THINGS

"SALLY, I just wanted to ask you—" he was a little embarrassed now.

"Yes, go ahead, Roger," Sally prompted. "Want me to give Mrs. Terhune a message?"

"Yes. You see, I just had to borrow some money and she's always been so good to me. Well, I'm earning it——"

"Pretty hard work, isn't it?"

"Oh, that's all right. I'm getting fifty dollars for it and that's money to me now. Tell her, please," he was hurrying, "that I'll be out the very minute I finish, to-morrow afternoon at the latest, and I'll fetch the money. Mrs. Buckley back yet?"

"No, but she will be next week."

"I'll get there first." His flashing smile explained more than the hurried words. "This is between me and Aunt Harriet. And you," he added meaningly, while Sally felt as much like blushing as she had ever felt in her life.

"All right, Roger," she replied. "You can count on me. And don't forget to ask for *me* when you come."

"It won't be at midnight this time," he assured her. "I just dropped in on a plane that night and had to make it then or wait too long. Well, good-by. I'm awfully glad you came——"

"So am I," Sally declared. "But I'll miss that bus and have *to stay* if I don't run."

"I'd take you home in a plane—" he was calling after her, but she knew that running was the one thing for her to do just then.

In the hustle to get aboard, Eleanor became separated from Sally, so that further conversation about Roger was out of the question. But Ted was making signs from his place, and Eleanor was at least making eyes from her corner, although she was so crowded, as was everyone else, that intermittent squeals seemed unavoidable.

Arriving home, Eleanor demanded that Sally ask Roger out to the basketball game, to Julia's party, to a little bridge for the club, and what didn't she want him invited to?

"But, Eleanor, he has to work," Sally protested. "And he goes out with the planes——"

"Now, Sal, you just want to keep him all to yourself," teased Eleanor. "He's an aw-

fully nice boy, and the girls will all be crazy about him. But *I* have first chance, haven't I?"

It was a comical situation and Sally was just bursting with the humor of it. But she couldn't tell Eleanor about the midnight call —that was entirely too personal a matter. And just imagine how beautifully it was all turning out!

"My pot of gold at the end of the rainbow," Sally was telling herself, when she was finally settled in the living room at home, where her grandmother was ready to hear the big news of the day.

"But tell me first, Granny, how you got along. How was my clever old lady? She is clever, isn't she?"

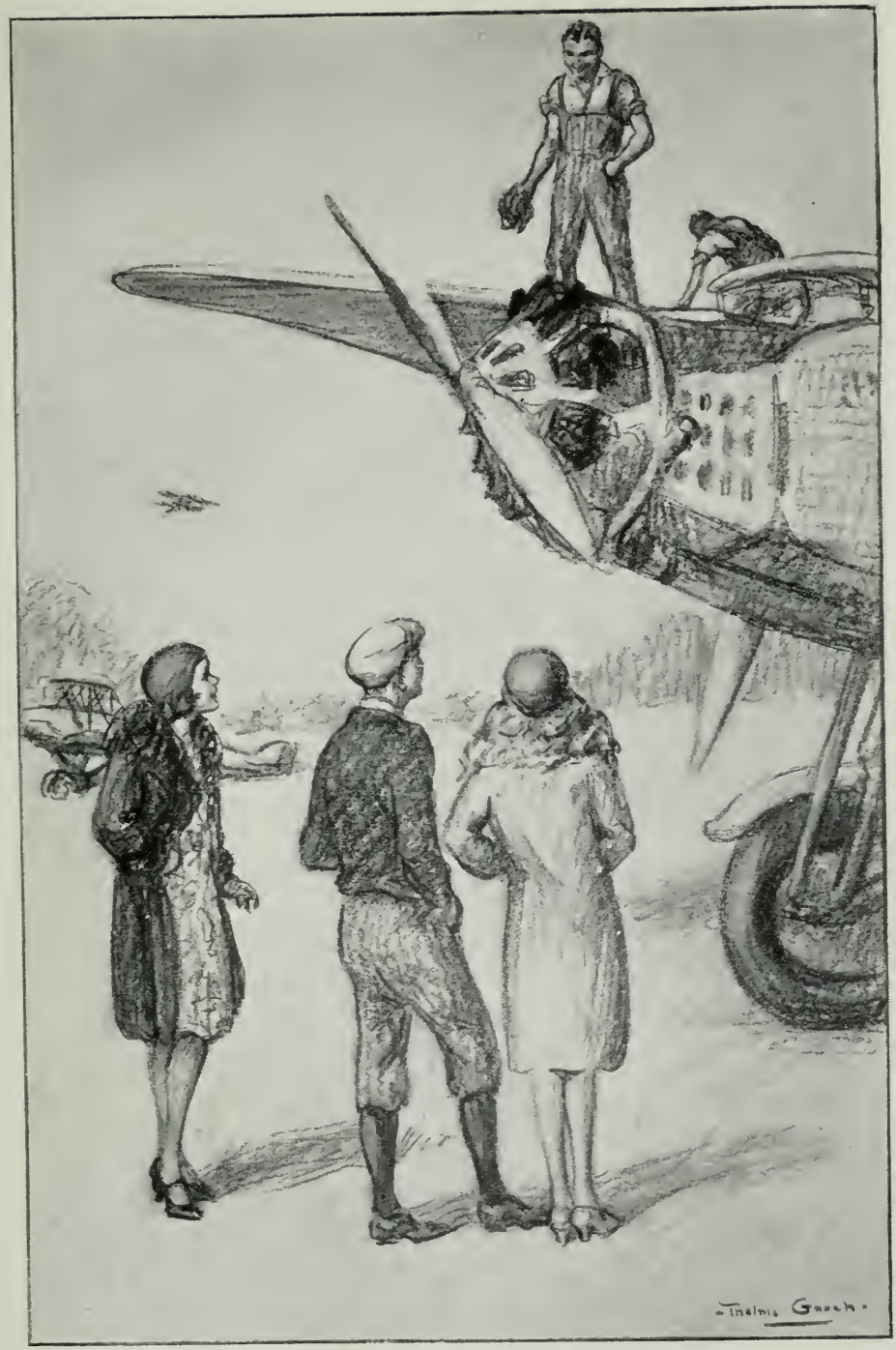
"Yes, dear, she is. Harriet is one of those smart old folks who need to be watched or she might get into mischief. She was telling me she had just loaned a young fellow fifty dollars to pay on a motorcycle, when his own family thought it unwise for him to get one."

"I'll bet that was Roger!" Sally exclaimed.

"It was. She called him Roger. Do you know him?"

"Yes, that is, I've met him," Sally replied. "We saw him this afternoon at the airport."

"Is he engaged at the airport?"



"OH, HELLO THERE!" HE CALLED OUT.

Sally Found Out. *Page* 124

"Very much engaged. He was scrubbing the wings of a plane."

"Why, child, what do you mean? Scrubbing the wings of a plane."

"Exactly that. And not with a nice long handled brush either. But with a big wad of mineral wool. You should see those boys work. Whew! They have to rub to get that exhaust oil off, and Roger *was* working. I suppose, in fact, I know," Sally corrected herself, "that he was earning that fifty dollars to pay back to Mrs. Terhune. He called her Aunt Harriet."

"She's very much interested in him," Sally's grandmother explained. "It seems, he's at college taking a special course in aëronautics, and he wanted the motorcycle to get to the air field quickly. Mrs. Terhune says his folks are so stingy that they wouldn't give him the money, although they could afford it. But I told her it might be because they considered a motorcycle too dangerous."

"Or too noisy," joked Sally. "I never could see how anyone could ride on top of that noise. But Mr. Buckley must have come home early to-night," she changed the subject. "You are home before tea."

"I could see Harriet was anxious to be rid of me," the grandmother laughed. "And

there seemed no reason why I should stay."

"Was Susan around?"

"Why? Sally, you are not anxious about Harriet, are you?"

"Not exactly, Granny, but just as you say, she does do queer things, and with Cousin Margaret coming home so soon I want to keep as close as possible to her. I think I'll call Peter to fetch me over again, as soon as we have tea."

"I would have stayed, Sally," her grandmother seemed sorry she had not stayed, "but Harriet just gave me to understand she was tired talking, and I felt rather in the way. But you know the situation there better than I do."

"Yes, I'm afraid I'd worry if I didn't see that she is all right, and that Mr. Buckley is home. If he's there my responsibility ends. But you were a dear, Granny, to let me off this afternoon," Sally declared enthusiastically. "I had a perfectly wonderful time. I can't tell you how much I enjoyed it."

"You show it, Sally. And I'm so glad you could go off with your school friends again."

"But where's Momsey?" Sally interrupted glancing at the clock. "She's late, isn't she?"

"Yes. I'll tell you, Sally, your mother has had a little setback in business. She's wor-

ried, I'm afraid," said her grandmother, guardedly.

"Worried? About business? Why? What's happened?" Sally was immediately concerned.

"Oh, don't mention it to her, dear. She wouldn't like my telling you, perhaps. But we are all one firm here and I feel we ought to share and share alike."

"We most certainly should share alike," Sally agreed. "I wish she'd come."

That was the beginning of an anxious waiting, for Sally's mother did not come that hour nor the next. Sally could not go to Mrs. Terhune's, but she had called Susan and found out that Mr. Buckley was at home, so she gave no further thought to that. But where was her mother?

Call after call upon the telephone to friend after friend brought no news; no one had seen nor heard from her, even houses where Sally felt certain she must have called, gave a negative reply to Sally's anxious inquiry.

Finally Sally called up Eleanor. Her brother had a car, and Sally wanted to drive around and look for her mother.

"I just can't stand it, Eleanor," she was phoning. "I've never been so upset before.

Mother always phones if she's going to be late."

"Don't get in a fit, Sally," advised her friend. "Your mother may have been some distance from a phone. But I'll get Jack. He's around some place and we'll be right over."

No sooner was the wire free than a call came and it was from Sally's mother!

"Oh, Momsey!" Sally sobbed. "I've been so frightened!"

"Why, darling, that's too bad," her mother was answering, "but I was in a car with a friend and we had a flat tire. She thought she could fix it. But I'll tell you when I get home. It's quite a story," she promised, at the same time saying there was no need of sending a car for her, because she was already on her way.

"And this settles it," declared Sally, as she turned from the phone to talk to her grandmother. "She's got to give business up absolutely. I don't care *what* we do. I'll not have her going about—" she went on breathlessly, "even if it is friends. Friends! All over creation. Granny, you've just got to fight with me. We'll not let her do this another week. I can work. Maybe I can't earn as much as she can but——"

"Sally, darling," the grandmother mercifully interrupted, "I do most certainly agree with you. And you've made a fine start, little as you think about what you have done for Mrs. Terhune. She's really quite fond of you."

"Well, I don't deserve her fondness," Sally admitted, still excited from the anxiety about her mother. "Everything I've done I've had a selfish motive in doing."

"But you did your best."

"Of course. Just try doing anything else where Lady Terhune is concerned."

"Yes. You are right there. She told me this afternoon she had a special weakness, as she put it, for helping youngsters, but she said they had to prove first that they were able to help themselves."

"That's fine," finished Sally dryly, wondering if that were why Mrs. Terhune had helped Roger. But the arrival of a strange car, bringing her mother, put Roger and his affairs out of the running.

"Momsey love! What happened! Just look at that clock!" was Sally's vehement greeting.

"I know, dear. And quite a lot happened," she stopped and her face betrayed her. Something unpleasant had happened.

"What?" Sally couldn't wait to hear.

"I lost—my sample case!"

"Your case!" The grandmother spoke first.

"Yes. And all my samples."

"How much?" Sally asked.

"Oh, a lot——"

"But how much were they worth?" demanded Sally.

"Now, Sally dear, don't worry. I can draw the money——"

"Mother love! Do you realize I am having my very first wages any day now?"

"Indeed I do." There was mist in her voice and in her eyes.

"Then why—why can't *I* pay for the loss?"

"*Your* money?"

"Why not? Is mine more precious than yours?"

"Darling——"

"Oh, I know how *you* feel about it. As if I had been sacrificed on the pagan altar of cruel labor, when really I've only been loafing. Now get your things off. You must be starved for a cup of tea. It's all ready. And let the old samples go wherever they have gone. Maybe whoever gets the lovely undies needs them. And think of the gorgeous nighties! Whew! Won't someone have a swell time?" Sally wound up.

"Where did you lose them, Clara?" the grandmother made a chance ask.

Then she told them she had been away out by the air field.

"The air field!" Sally cried from the kitchen. "Don't tell me you lost that case of samples with your cards in it out there?"

"Well, I'm afraid I did. I was riding with Mrs. Morton and we had a flat tire. We both got out—there was no garage near and no car in sight. We worked awhile and found we couldn't do anything. Then she started off toward a garage and I waited at the car. She was only gone a few minutes when I went to a turn of the road to look in the other direction for a garage. I never lost sight of the car."

"And the case was *gone* when you came back?" Sally put in.

"It was gone when we got in the car again."

"Come, girls, we must all have our tea," the elder mother interrupted. "We all need it, I'm sure. And we'll let Sally do her detective work when we finish. I suppose a ghost from an airship took the sample case," laughed Mrs. Perry, sensing the mystery that Sally would be bound to compound from the loss.

"Well, one thing, Granny," Sally inter-

posed, pouring the tea while Granny served the salad, "no girls will be apt to find it on that road, for no one could walk out there. Momsey, how do you suppose it got out of the car, anyway?"

"Daughter, I just can't imagine. The garage men were busy with the tire and we were fussing around because it was almost dark, and naturally we were in a hurry to start. Certainly I put the case in the car, and when I went to take it out—I had put it in front on the floor—it was not there."

"But don't worry about it, Momsey. I'm getting paid to-morrow, and then!"

Sally made a sweeping gesture that swept widely about the room. Evidently her pay check was going to work miracles.

CHAPTER XIII

ANOTHER ADVENTURE

THE lost samples involved a greater loss than their mere value, because included in the dainty underthings was a bridal set, the samples having just been made by a special designer and there was no duplicate set. These samples were the artistic handwork of a woman and her invalid daughter, and were artistic indeed, the most beautiful materials wrought into the most effective pattern possible to conceive. Invalids always seem to do the finest work; they are so painstaking.

The loss of this sample set was almost beyond price estimate, for while the models were made and kept in muslins, it would take a long time to execute them again in the silks.

Sally's mother, Mrs. Graves, was inconsolate. She phoned everywhere and Sally phoned everywhere else all evening, but without results. It was so queer to have had the case disappear from the car as it did.

"Momsey," Sally began once more, "tell

me exactly what happened while the men were repairing the tire."

"Yes, darling. They drove up——"

"Who?"

"The mechanic and his helper, a young colored boy."

"They worked on the tire?"

"Yes, and they were pretty cross about it, too. It was late, you see, and they wanted to get home."

"Did it take them long?"

"Quite a while. Then our car stuck a little and the colored boy started it for us."

"It was a roadster?"

"Yes. Now, don't worry any more, daughter. I'm sure it will be found." But Mrs. Graves' sigh was entirely contradictory to that opinion.

"I can't see why Mrs. Morton drives such an old rattlebox," Sally complained. "It isn't as if she couldn't afford a real car."

"Now, Sally, Mrs. Morton has always been kind to me, and has often given me a most helpful ride in that same old car," her mother reminded her. "So we mustn't find fault. In fact, we had just been to Bennets; Estelle Bennet is going to be a bride very soon, you know, and it was for her the special samples had been hurried through."

"Well, as long as your cards were in the case I feel sure they'll turn up," Sally encouraged. "I wish I didn't have to go to Terhune's in the morning. I'd have more time to hunt. But never mind, Momsey, we'll get them; you'll see."

Which sounded fine, but was not entirely convincing.

Next day, Sally had a phone message from Roger at Mrs. Terhune's. He was awfully busy getting ready to go some place, he didn't say just where, but he wanted Sally to tell Aunt Harriet that he would be out to see her the next afternoon, or perhaps that very evening. Also, if his folks phoned, please to tell them he would be in college on Thursday. This was Tuesday. He was so rushed he couldn't say much on the phone, but explained he had called then because he was afraid he wouldn't get another chance.

"But why shouldn't he phone home himself?" Sally asked Mrs. Terhune, naturally enough, when she gave the old lady the brief message.

"Because he's wise," Mrs. Terhune replied. "If he phoned them that he was going to be out of college for a day, they would forbid him and then he couldn't go."

"But maybe he shouldn't?" she argued further.

"I'd trust that boy," Mrs. Terhune declared. "He has a better head on him than the rest of his family all put together. That's why I'm backing him."

"Backing him!" Surely this was being a modern old lady, thought Sally.

"Yes. He wants to be an airman, his college has the course, and why shouldn't he take it? There's his mother, always as nervous as a cat; Celia Thayer was her maiden name. And his father, Ben Laird, not much better. He's an only child, Roger is, and maybe that made matters worse, for Celia had too much time to worry about him and fuss over him. You see, *I'm* his godmother."

"Oh," said Sally briefly, feeling obliged to discourage such long talks as Mrs. Terhune seemed setting out for. She never rested well after she talked too much and it was time for her afternoon nap.

Just then the mail arrived, and in it came Sally's check.

"My—first pay!" she told herself, when Susan had smilingly left the letter in her hand.

Imagine Sour Susan smiling!

Off to her own room hurried Sally. She

knew the check was in the envelope before she opened it, for Mrs. Buckley used long checks in a special business envelope, just as Mr. Buckley did.

"Yes," she confirmed her opinion as the check came out with the brief note. "There it is! Fifty! That's a lot for a girl to get on her first pay day. Eleanor began by washing dish towels in the country at five cents a day. But fifty dollars!" Sally was jubilant.

She read the note with one flash of her eyes across the sheet. Mrs. Buckley would be home to-morrow at the latest, and Sally might like to use the check, so she was mailing it ahead. Also, she was delighted (and the word was underlined) with the reports from her mother. There were a few more words of praise for Sally, of love to her (Sally's) mother, and then the check. Fine! O.K., and all the rest.

Sally hurried to find Susan. She was in the dining room counting the spoons.

"Susan," she began, "could I be off for an hour? I want to run in town to an office and I'll be back by the time Mrs. Terhune wakes for her tea."

"Take your time," answered Susan, who had not overcome that one habit of giving an order instead of taking one. She was, how-

ever, much kinder to Sally now, and Mrs. Terhune had explained that, like herself, she had come to trust Sally and not to consider her the "meddling little snip" they had both expected her to be.

Sally took the trouble to put on her printed silk, as she imagined she might find the office warm and be obliged to take off her coat. She looked critically at her airman's helmet, the hat she had made for the bus ride. Yes, she liked it still. It was smart and becoming, and a hat that fitted like a real helmet. The reflection returning from her mirror was pretty good, if Sally did say so herself. She was no beauty but there were girls worse looking, lots of them.

Her eyes were bright and her cheeks needed no rouge as she hurried to be about her important undertaking. Once again she was going to do something without asking for her mother's or even her grandmother's advice. She hoped it would be all right; it just *had* to be all right, for this being in business was certainly a most complicated matter. She had never imagined it could have so many angles.

Quickly as her nimble feet could carry her, Sally sped off to the village. There she took a trolley to a near-by city where was situated

the office of the Allsilk Finery Company for which her mother was an agent.

The fine new brick building was one of the newer office buildings, and here Sally stepped into the elevator to float to the fifth floor. On a door directly opposite the elevator she read the name of the firm she was looking for, opened the glass door and there was confronted by another girl, the clerk.

"Can I see Mr. Turner?" Sally asked promptly. That was the name of the manager, and she had often heard her mother speak of Mr. Turner.

"We don't need any more salesladies." The girl at the desk seemed glad of it.

"I'm not applying for work. I wish to see Mr. Turner on a personal matter." Sally could be high-hat herself and she was.

"Oh." The young lady swung around, looked up and down the wall, then decided to look at Sally.

"Have you a card?" she asked challengingly.

"Yes," said Sally defiantly, for she had been ready for that. Her card was a written one but it bore her name, and the unpleasant, fatuous clerk could not refuse to take it to Mr. Turner. She took it.

"This way," was all she said when she came back, but Sally went—that way.

A pleasant-looking man, and he wasn't smoking a big, fat cigar either, greeted Sally as she entered the private office. This was Mr. Turner.

"Miss Graves?" he said pointing to a chair.

Sally smilingly said "Mr. Turner," and sat down in the chair. "You know I'm Clara Graves' daughter——"

"Yes. Mrs. Graves is one of our best sales-ladies, and I mean *lady* when I say it," stated Mr. Turner pleasantly. He was nice. It was surely going to be all right.

"But Mother met with an accident——"

"An accident?"

"No. I should have said a mishap to a car in which she was riding," Sally hurried to make clear. "But the accident was the loss of her sample case."

"Yes, she phoned me. Too bad but not so serious." Mr. Turner put Sally at ease quickly.

"Mr. Turner, I've come to pay for those samples," Sally blurted out, putting her hand to her flat purse. She had no time to waste.

"To pay for them?" He was surprised and showed it.

"Yes. I don't mind telling you" (she knew

she would have to) "that I've just received my first pay check."

"Your first pay check? Aren't you at school?"

"I was, until last month. And I may go back," Sally told the pleasant Mr. Turner. "I have been helping a friend" (that didn't sound "so good," so she went on), "just being sort of companion."

"I see." He twirled in the big chair and played with his watch chain, just as they always do in the movies. Sally was glad, somehow, that the big cigar was missing. She liked Mr. Turner and wanted him to be real.

"Mother has been dreadfully worried about losing the samples," she told him, "but I didn't tell her I was coming in to see you about them."

"She wouldn't want *you* to—to make it up." Mr. Turner was well aware of Mrs. Graves' high principles.

"No. But I owe her everything, of course. Any money that *she* has ever earned she used for *me,* but when it comes to *my* money—" Sally smiled understandingly.

"I know. Your mother is a very fine little woman. And it seems to me," he stopped cautiously, then continued, after giving Sally a look of almost fatherly kindness, "it seems

to me," he repeated, "that Mrs. Graves has an equally fine daughter."

Sally was too embarrassed to reply. She was trying to get him to the point of settlement and now held her precious check in her hand.

"You may put that away," Mr. Turner then said. "I couldn't take your check. And please tell your mother for me not to worry about those samples. If they turn up," he made a gesture that added to his remark, "so much the better. But if they do not, she is not to consider it a personal loss."

The expression of gratitude Sally tried to offer was checked by the generous manager. In fact, it was he who spoke of appreciation for the fine service Sally's mother had given the Allsilk Company.

"I had no idea Mrs. Graves had a daughter as old as you," he remarked. "And I like your spirit. I call it business principle, and you can tell your mother for me that we stand ready to stock a nice little store for her, as soon as she will undertake it with your help."

"Oh, Mr. Turner! A store for us to run!" Sally could not help exclaiming. She was thrilled at the mention of such a possibility.

"Would you like it?"

"I'd love it. You see, there are three of us. My grandmother is just as capable as we are, and we had all hoped some day to be able to do something together."

"You won't have to wait. We'll furnish the stock, get the store, and do everything necessary in the financial line," Mr. Turner interrupted her to say. "But of course," he made clear, "I would not want you to leave school. When you finish it will be time enough to go into the plans."

There it was again. When she would leave school.

Sally was standing and Mr. Turner had risen also. She wanted to say that school didn't matter, that she was determined her mother would no longer attend to business as she had been doing, but she couldn't say a word except to repeat her thanks.

What an opportunity! To have one of those adorable little shops with the lovely silk things for her and for her mother and for her grandmother, to sell, to sort, to display and have charge of! Surely this was what she had wanted and hadn't really known how to even dream of it. To have a shop set up by the Allsilk Company! It was beyond her best dreams of going into business.

And to be able to go home and tell her mother that the loss of the samples had been canceled!

"But she'll want to find them, just the same," Sally knew and reminded herself. "My mother wouldn't let a loss go like that without doing everything possible to recover it."

She was in the trolley and hurrying mentally back to Mrs. Terhune. She would be awake and want her tea.

"Oh, well!" sighed Sally contentedly, "today I've made one more friend. And I'm sure a man like Mr. Turner is worth having as a friend."

CHAPTER XIV

TOO GOOD BUT TRUE

ALL of this took but little more than an hour, and when Sally got back to Mrs. Terhune that lady had not even missed her. Affairs there seemed now of little account to Sally, for her mind was filled with the new matters of so much greater interest to herself.

Mechanically she went about her duties; Mrs. Buckley's quiet household was just a little bit fluttered over its mistress' home coming, that is, Susan did more dusting and the cook did more cooking. Sally could hardly wait until time for Peter to drive her home, and all of Mrs. Terhune's talk of Roger and his hopes as a coming airman, seemed flat and pointless now. Refreshed by her nap the old lady talked incessantly, and it was as much as Sally could do to answer politely.

"Now, Roger has a great plan in mind," Mrs. Terhune kept saying. "There's some old man with a fine idea for scouring material for the planes—" But Sally couldn't even

listen to that. Maybe there was an old man, and maybe he did have a new airplane scouring soap, but what was that to Sally Graves who had a new plan for a beautiful little silk shop, in which her mother, her grandmother and she herself could all find real adventure? Adventure that would insure them good meals, keep up their little home, get them clothes and all the other practical things of life that have to be worked out through some sort of adventure? For work is exactly that.

Girls don't worry about the weather. What if winter is cold and icy; doesn't it bring skating, and skiing and sledding? What if winds do blow hard and noisily; don't they bring down the hickory nuts? Winter is as fine for fun and sports as is summer, every girl knows that.

So when the wind howled as it did when Peter pulled Mrs. Buckley's car up to Sally's curb, she didn't mind it in the least. Her heart was filled with the happiness of good news, and even when her hat went off (she wasn't wearing the tight little helmet now), even then she laughed merrily and hurried after it before Peter's car should turn around.

"Hello! Hello! Hello!" Sally called upon entering her door. "Don't tell me *every*body isn't home?"

"We are! We are!" came the rallying answer from upstairs, both the mother voices blending musically.

"I'm just choked with news!" Sally exploded, giving her old hat a fine toss across the room.

"News, dear, what?" asked her mother. She had been looking over long lists of names and numbers and Sally knew what that "order sheet" meant. She was checking up on her lost samples.

"Yeppe. I saw your Mr. Turner——"

"Salva!" When her mother called her that it was always serious.

"Why not? He's lovely, and he likes me. He told me so." Sally planted her two feet down so emphatically her heels skidded a little.

"Now, let's be calm and quiet," cautioned the grandmother. She felt the warning was necessary as Sally's spirits mounted.

"How can I tell you, Granny, if I'm quiet?" Sally was too exuberant to be subdued like that.

Mrs. Graves was shaking her head doubtfully. She seemed to fear the worst; as if Sally had done something else perhaps as terrible as leaving school.

"Please go on, daughter," she begged.

"Dying to." Again the heels went up and down, but she politely kept her hands still. "Yes, I saw Mr. Turner, and he says you are not to worry about the samples."

"But Sally, why did you do that?" her mother protested.

"Because I got my check," she was waving an envelope, "and I went to pay for the undies."

"Sally Graves!" Her mother's voice was tragic.

"Oh, I knew you would object," she laughed along, "that was the reason I didn't tell you."

A suspicious little chuckle came from the direction of her grandmother's chair.

"Sally Graves, you are incorrigible," the grandmother declared, just as if she had said, "Sally Graves, you are a darling," which was what she meant.

"You know, girls, the news is so good, I can't bear to break it. Just like licking a lollypop all around without touching the top." Sally was exasperating.

"It must be wonderful," her mother said, trying to be sarcastic.

"It is. Listen. Fold your hands and sit up straight. Granny, stop giggling!"

The giggle broke out into a real laugh then, and even Mrs. Graves who was sitting as severe as a judge, smiled in spite of herself.

"Mr. Turner offered to set us all up"—Sally paused for effect, rolled her eyes and jabbed her heels—"up in a darling—little shop, right in our own—home—town, or next door to it in Selby."

"A shop!"

"Yes. Can you imagine? Maybe in Poole's block. Wouldn't that be—wonderful?"

"You mean that Mr. Turner is going to start——"

"No, I don't, Momsey. I mean that *we* are going to start a modern shop with supplies from the Allsilk Finery factory. Mr. Turner stands ready (his very words) to get the shop, stock it and give us the signal to go, maybe at the pop of a pistol, like they do at the races." Sally relaxed a little after that noble effort.

"Wouldn't that be fine?" the grandmother managed to remark. "Then we could all be in business right here at home."

"Granny, you are the only sensible one in the family," declared Sally. "Being in business so near home will mean a lot. It will

mean that Momsey can't go gallivanting around the world any more, losing herself and everything."

"Please listen, Sally," her mother checked that flow of nonsense. "I cannot understand how Mr. Turner could offer to do such a thing. I have heard that the firm was considering starting some small shops, like demonstrating agencies, but there are others who have been with the company longer than I have. I can't see why——"

"Because he liked *me,*" declared Sally simply. "He told me so. I wouldn't wonder but he may be crazy about me. Has he any daughter bigger than I am?"

"Sally! I know nothing about Mr. Turner's family."

"Well, we don't have to. All we need to know is that *we,* Granny, Momsey and Sally —I, are going to have a perfectly spiffy shop right near Nelson. And what *we* won't sell in finery, simply won't be worth having around."

"But Sally," again spoke her mother in a different tone of voice, "you are going back to school. You promised, didn't you?"

"Ye-es." It was a slow admission. There was always that going back to school to consider. But just now Sally did not want to

consider it. She wanted to think of so many other things. Of how the girls would come to that shop, a real prettily decorated place, of course, absolutely modern in the strict sense of the word, which would mean being correctly quaint. She could see it all without shutting her eyes, and she wondered would the nice airman ever come by that way. Too bad she wouldn't be selling neckties.

"And you got your check?" Her grandmother was speaking. The words brought Sally back to realities.

"Oh, yes," she smiled guiltily. She had been dreaming right there under the eyes of her two girls. "Yes, Granny love, and there it is."

She passed it around for inspection. A check for fifty dollars, all her own! Her mother was inclined to be teary over it but the grandmother said it was simply fine.

"I'm afraid I'll never make up my mind just what to do with it," Sally joked. "First, I was going to buy so many different things; then I was going to set up a shop—not *your* shop, Momsey, another one," she admitted, while they smiled indulgently. "Then I felt surely I had found the right use for the old thing by paying for mother's lost nighties,

but Mr. Turner wouldn't take it. So *there* it is! Now what *will* I do with it?"

"Put it in the bank," advised her mother.

"And have the bank fail." Sally would joke.

"Buy yourself a new winter coat," her grandmother suggested, for she would be sure to want Sally to have something for herself out of that first money. There were other suggestions but the matter was left unsettled.

"Just hear the wind," remarked Mrs. Graves, as a sudden roar seemed to swoop down upon the house.

"That isn't wind, that's—someone coming here!"

The roar stopped, apparently at the door. Sally hurried to open it.

"Hello!" came a shout from somewhere.

Could that be—it was, Roger!

"Hello!" called back Sally, so surprised she could hardly utter the word. "Roger!" she added finally.

"Brought you company," he was saying, as he was helping someone out of the side car of the motorcycle. That must be Mrs. Terhune's motorcycle, thought Sally.

"Yes'm. This is right. This is the place. Hello, Sally! Doan you know me? I'se Rosette!"

"Rosette?"

"Yes'm. 'Member me? I'se from Mrs. Turrell's——"

Roger was now on the porch; Rosette was there also with something under her arm.

"She said she knew you," he began, as Sally, still dazed, led them both in.

"Of course, I know Rosette. But what happened?" Sally had stopped at the vestibule to allow the two strangers time to sort of straighten out.

"Nuthin' happened," Rosette lisped, "but I jest found it. Tha's all."

"You found it!"

Mrs. Graves and Mrs. Perry had both exclaimed. They too were now in the group around the door. Sally was trying to be polite to Roger, and he seemed unable to keep from laughing. It was so absurd, that colored girl, Rosette, with the leather case. She looked funnier than ever, in a great huddle of coats and surely more than one cap. Her feet were somewhere in the big sloppy arctics, and she certainly did look ridiculous. And riding in the side car of a motorcycle did more to make her look funny, for it seemed to have blown her about freely, even her big black and white eyes looked somewhat out of place.

Mrs. Graves and her mother were simply

speechless. Sally tried to speak, then her mother found words.

"My sample case!" she barely spoke, her voice was smothered in surprise. "Sally dear, who is this girl?"

"This is Mrs. Turrell's kitchen maid. Don't you remember I told you about her? Her name is Rosette and can you believe it? She actually has found your case."

"Yes'm. I told Torable it was yourn and I fisted him for it. He didn't want to give it up, but I got it. Here 'tis." She turned it over in her gloved hands but did not offer to part with it.

The young man had been waiting to speak, but Rosette and the sample case had barred him out. Now he was determined to say something.

"She found it, or someone found it, near the air field," she told me. "I found her waiting for a bus that wouldn't come, so I picked her up," he said simply.

"And you came all the way out here? Mother and grandmother," Sally introduced, "this is Roger Laird, Mrs. Terhune's friend. You have heard me speak of him."

"Oh, yes." Both bowed and smiled and seemed to remember perfectly. "It was aw-

fully good of you to drive the girl away out here," Mrs. Graves added.

"No trouble at all." He was now bowing and smiling and Sally was being proud of him. "It's just a matter of time. I was hoping to get to Aunt Harriet's but I can't make it now. I'm due back at a special class in less time than I can travel there." He was telling this to Sally. "Could you give Aunt Harriet a message for me?" he asked then.

"I'd be glad to, of course," stammered Sally. It was all so absurdly embarrassing with Rosette in the center of the picture, like a comedy star.

"I had this note ready for Aunt Harriet," Roger continued. He handed Sally an envelope. "Pardon its being sealed," he finished.

"I'm glad it is sealed," Sally declared. "Mrs. Terhune likes them that way."

They both laughed, but it was evident Roger was really in a hurry. Mrs. Graves and Mrs. Perry wanted to thank him, to talk to him and become acquainted, but he was already moving toward the door, although he hadn't gone very far away from it during his brief call.

Sally noticed he was "dressed up," that is,

he looked sort of like a cadet in his airman's uniform, and his hair was all finely slicked, in spite of the trouble it must have been to take that tight cap off without ruffling it all up. The clear, cold air had made his eyes sparkle, and his cheeks were bitten to a glow. Altogether Sally just thought him handsome as usual, and he was. He was certainly much better looking dressed for class than for scrubbing plane wings.

But Rosette! She stood there with the precious sample case still grasped in her clumsily gloved hands, and everyone wondered if it would take some special sort of implement to pry the case loose from her. She surely was holding on to it.

"I'm sorry I must rush so," Roger was saying to the ladies. "The girl says she works near here——"

"Yes'm," came back Rosette, swinging from side to side in that motion peculiar to girls like her when they feel sort of proud. "I does work near here and I'se stayin' all night tonight; to help out Verbena. She's mah friend and she's goin to a pahty. I'se goin' to get coffee for her lady—Mrs. Hatten—no, Hinton, it is. Know her?"

No one seemed to, and Roger couldn't wait

a moment longer for any good news Rosette might still be able to give out.

Sally went to the door with him. The wind blew so hard she had to pull the inner door almost shut, as she and Roger stood for a moment in the little vestibule.

CHAPTER XV

A QUEER COMBINATION

"I CAN'T tell you how grateful I am," Sally murmured. The little light above them showed her to be a very pretty Sally, and all the admiration was not on her side, that is, as she admired Roger, he was also admiring her.

He was thinking she was just the best-looking girl and all that, but if the truth should be given away, Roger was too much interested in airship affairs to think much about girls as girls. Of course, *this* was different; this was thinking about Sally as Sally.

"I'm the one to talk about gratitude," he replied, giving his hair a boyish push back that Sally was afraid would spoil it all up for his class. "You did me a big favor," he added, "and I'm not likely to forget it either."

"*I* did you a favor?"

"You surely did. That night I crept in on

Aunt Harriet, and you found me in the hall——"

"What could I have done? Yelled police?" scoffed Sally.

"Well, some girls would have done just that. But you didn't. And you've never said a word about it——"

"Now, Roger," and Sally felt exactly as if she were talking to one of the boys from her own school, "just don't be silly. If I made a noise then, I might have scared the old lady and lost my job."

"Your job!"

"Yes, and I got paid to-day, if you want to know." She didn't boast how much, but she felt like doing so. She couldn't forget that check easily.

"Well, I'll certainly miss class call. Good night and thanks——"

"Thank you. You brought us good news to-night."

"And good company. What did you call her? Rosalind?"

"Worse; Rosette. Listen to her. Isn't she funny? Good night——"

"Don't forget to give Aunt Harriet——"

"I won't. See you soon?"

"You bet. Good night, Sally!"

She heard his motorcycle roar away and

somehow she was glad it was a land car and not an airplane. She liked Roger. Never having had a brother, and only school boys to meet casually, this confidence between her and Roger had given Sally a definite interest. He was young, ambitious and seemed brave enough to be called fearless. She too was young, ambitious, and she hoped she was brave.

But airplanes were still concerned with dangers, especially when they were out of sight and very much in the wind. It would be different, of course, if she were standing with a friend waiting to step into a ship. Sally could easily imagine that nearness would dispel all fear.

But, just the same, she was glad Roger was riding in an earth-bound motorcycle, even if it did make an awful noise.

Back in the living room with the folks, she made a determined effort to do what they were doing. They were listening to Rosette's story of finding the sample case, and to Sally it sounded about as coherent as listening to the roar of Roger's car.

"Jest that a-way, Miss Graves. I fought Torable——"

"Torable? Is that a boy's name?" Sally asked.

"Yes'm. He's so turrible we-all calls him Torable. He works for the girage——"

"Oh, he works at the garage," Mrs. Graves helped out.

"Yes'm. Gets seven, eight and mebby nine dollars a week, Torable does. And he jest spends it all." Her voice drawled into tragic tones, matched by her rolling eyes.

"He must be the boy who started our car," again Mrs. Graves assisted Rosette. She surely needed assistance.

"Yes'm. That's him. He allus starts cars but he can't stop em so good."

"I'll take the case, Rosette," Sally ventured, "and I suppose you will have to be going on to your work." A broad hint.

"Ain't no hurry. I'se hired fer breakfast. Here's the case and I likes the things lovely."

With a sigh of sheer relief Mrs. Graves took the case Sally was handing her. They thought she would never give it up.

"We better look the things over," Sally suggested. She didn't see why Rosette should have handled them, as she must have done to like them. They were so easily wrinkled in poor folding. But again, it was natural she would have looked at what Torable found in the bag.

"I must give you something for finding

them," Mrs. Graves offered. She was genuinely glad to get those samples back and it was indeed worth something to get them. Mrs. Perry, the grandmother, was now laying the dainty finery out on the long table. They seemed to be all there.

"Is the bridal set all right?" Mrs. Graves asked. "There it is, Sally. In that big envelope."

Sally took the white silk crêpe set out and laid them in a special place. Yes, they appeared to be all right. That was the sample set for Estelle Bennet. How glad her mother would be to go to Estelle and take that important order! It would mean a generous commission, and Sally realized at once, she would be powerless to prevent her mother continuing business with such prospects as those.

"What should I offer Rosette?" her mother was asking out of that girl's hearing.

"I don't know. I'll ask her." She put the paper carefully over the bridal set and went toward Rosette.

"Now, Rosette," Sally began in a clear, decided voice, "can't you help us clear up this mystery? How did Terrible——"

"You means Torable. It means terrible, but Torable wouldn't let us call him Terrible."

"Oh, I see," Sally had to laugh at that foolish mix-up. "He was the boy who got in the ladies' car to start it; wasn't he?"

"Sure he started it; Torable did. He starts 'em fine, he does."

"And this case was in the front of the car?"

"He kicked it, he says, thought it was the boss'. Then he fired it out." She threw her arms out in front of her as far as the coats she was wearing would permit, "then he picked it up and the boss says it isn't hiss'n."

"That boss should have taken care of it," Sally declared. "He must have konwn——"

"But daughter," interrupted her mother, "he was only a garage workman and anxious to get home to his supper. He could hardly be expected to have gone to more trouble about a little bag."

" 'Twasn't like that, no, not that a-way," Rosette interjected. "Torable ain't so dumb. He seed it was a losted bag and he finds it, so he keeps it."

At last the story was out, the mystery explained!

"And how did *you* get it?" asked Mrs. Perry. She had checked up the list and found all the pieces intact.

"I fighted him for it. He showed it to me

and I knowed Sally's name on them there kairds."

"Oh, yes. My cards gave you the name," Mrs. Graves said a little impatiently, for the girl was tantalizing in her telling of the way it happened.

"Yes'm." She was still waiting and Sally guessed what for.

"What shall we give you as a reward, Rosette? What would you like?" Sally asked her.

"I likes them all," she surprised them by answering. "They's all awful pretty. But if you wants to give me one special, I likes best the suit in the enovelp——"

"In the envelope!" gasped Sally. "Mother," she was choking with laughter, "she thinks she would like the—bridal—set!"

They just roared, all three of them, while Rosette sat there listening and looking. She had been sitting down ever since Roger went, and there was no telling when she would decide to get up. Imagine that funny girl with a cobwebby bridal set of the very finest materials and the choicest designs! It was so absurd, Sally just shrieked, until her mother hinted she had better not be quite so obstreperous—she might hurt Rosette's feelings. So

it was Sally who first recovered herself, and it was Sally who offered to compromise.

"But these goods do not belong to us," she finally told the girl; "they have to be returned to the Allsilk Company. We will give you some money. How would five dollars——"

"Five dollars!" she exclaimed. "Lordy me, tha's a lot. I could get myself shoes an' a coat——"

"Not for five dollars!" depreciated Mrs. Graves.

"Yes'm. Fer five dollars I can. They's *wurth* a lot more but I gets 'em cheap. They isn't jest new, but jest like new." Was anyone ever as discriminating as Rosette?

"You mean, you get them in a second-hand——"

"Oh, no'm, I don't go near no dirty second-hand shop," scoffed Rosette. "I goes to the rimmage——"

"Oh, the rummage," interpreted Sally, who was already handing Rosette a five-dollar bill.

"Yes'm. Tha's it, the rimmage. They has awful nice things there; thanks." She was glowing over the bill and folding it up carefully. "I'll get me something lovely with this. You're awful kind and I'm awful—

awful—" The strain was too great; Sally eased it by supplying the word:

"Grateful. We know you are, Rosette, and we are grateful too. You don't know how glad we are to get the case back. It means an awful lot to us."

"Tha's nice, lovely," smiled Rosette, her big eyes bigger with pleasure, and she was going now that she had that five dollars, it seemed she couldn't wait. "How come you don't go to work fer Mrs. Turrell?" she asked Sally, pausing, in her tramp to the door, to do so.

"To work for Mrs. Turrell?" Then Sally remembered. Rosette had offered her her "job" washing dishes there. "Oh, I've been busy—" she began.

"Workin'? You is? Tha's fine. You white girls jest don't know. You thinks workin' is—is—" She curled her lips, rolled her eyes in an expression of complete contempt. "You thinks workin' is *low down!* 'Tisn't! 'Tain' no lower down than nuthun else. It's jest proud to work and git yer pay!"

Sally clapped her hands in applause. No words, no other gesture than a good handclap seemed appropriate for Rosette's oration on the dignity of labor. True, her words were weak but her heartbeat was in them, and that was strong, very brave and strong. High-minded,

high-principled, upright, brave Rosette! She would work and earn to "be proud," she would buy her clothes at the "rimmage" because she felt she got good value there. Certainly little Rosette with her funny looks, her funny clothes and her funny ways was a pearl at heart. And she wanted to share her independence with Sally by getting *her* a job!

"It is the most remarkable thing," reasoned the grandmother, "that you happened to know Rosette, Sally."

"Oh, I met her last fall. She helped to make up my mind to go to work. *She* was in Mrs. Turrell's kitchen when I brought her the apples," Sally explained.

"Them was lovely apples," appended Rosette, "and Mrs. Turrell liked 'em fine. I made sass with the peels and skins and fetched it home. Mrs. Turrell said I could."

"I tell you!" exclaimed Sally with the air of grabbing at an inspiration. "You stop here to-morrow when you're going home, Rosette, and we'll have a little basket ready for you to take with you. I think we have a few apples left in the storeroom."

"But she can't go over to Hintons' now alone," Mrs. Perry, the grandmother pointed out. "It's too dark and lonely, and it's a wild night, getting worse all the time."

"Mother and I will walk up to Main Street with her; then there are houses all the way over," Sally said. "Come along, Momsey; I'm dying for a breath of air."

" 'Tain't no need," protested Rosette. "I'se not any afraid, not a bit. I was a-standin' out there by the air field waitin' fer a bus when that nice boy come along. 'Course I knowed *his* car wasn't no bus," she put up her hand to smother a laugh, "but he took me on jest the same. Said the last bus was gone. I didn't know that. They comes and goes so different."

"Uncertain," supplied Sally at the risk of detaining her for further argument.

"Yes'm, they is." Rosette wasn't going to skid on a word like uncertain. It was too mouth filling for a mouth that always seemed full.

"It was awful good of him," she continued after an awkward pause. "I should mebby have to go all the way back and get Torable to drive me if he hadn't come along."

Mrs. Graves had slipped into her coat and Sally was already in hers. But that didn't mean that Rosette was ready to start. She seemed to be having such a splendid time she hated to leave. She talked about the ride in that "noise wagon," as she impolitely called

Roger's motorcycle side car, and she laughed uproariously as she recalled some of the bumps "they took."

But even Rosettes can be conquered when girls like Sally Graves undertake the task. So finally all three started off to walk to Main Street, Sally and her mother being the second escort that happy little colored girl had been fortunate to fall in with on the eventful night.

And they reached the brightly lighted corner without further mishap.

CHAPTER XVI

CONFUSION

IT HAD been so funny for Rosette to ask for the finest of all the sets in Mrs. Graves' sample case, that Sally and her mother and Sally's grandmother considered it even funnier than how Rosette must have looked and felt dashing along through winds and blasts in the side car of Roger's motorcycle.

"Terrible!" Sally would moan in a gale of laughter, as all three again sat in the living room, after having safely deposited Rosette at the corner of Main and Walnut Streets that night. "I can imagine her all dressed up in the outfit. Wouldn't it make a screaming comedy?"

"It certainly would," Mrs. Perry, the grandmother, agreed. "But I tell you, Sally, that's a nice boy. It was fine of him to bring the girl away out here when he was so hurried to get to his class."

"He *is* a nice chap," Sally said, a little too

quickly. She had many things on her mind and one of them was Roger.

"But the strange part of it all seems to me to be the actual finding of the case by someone who knew us," Mrs. Graves remarked. Naturally she was most concerned with the recovery of her precious samples.

"However did you get to know that girl, Sally?" her grandmother asked, as it was all rather confusing still.

"She was working in Mrs. Turrell's kitchen."

"But you don't usually go in the kitchen?" questioned her mother.

"Certainly I do when I'm toting kitchen stuff," Sally explained. "I had apples that day."

"And you stopped to talk with Rosette?"

"She was the funniest thing. Insisted I should go to work, and kept saying we 'jest didn't know.' Somehow I agreed with her," Sally admitted, putting up the newspaper which had received scant attention in her hands. "It was because she talked with me that afternoon that I really decided to get a job," she told them finally.

"And it was because you talked with her, were friendly with her, that she brought back that sample case," pointed out Mrs. Perry.

"Otherwise, she might not have gone to so much trouble about it."

"Now, Granny, you mustn't give me a swelled head. I didn't find it," argued Sally, "Rosette did."

"No," said her grandmother simply. But she didn't need to repeat that Sally had helped to find it by making a friend of the girl who actually did. For it was plain to all of them that Rosette just loved those wonderful undies, and she might have kept them had she not felt friendly with Sally. She could not have known the obligation of advertising or looking for an owner. Her simplicity of mind might have kept to the childish fable of "findings bring keepings."

"It pays to be friendly," said Sally's mother, smiling at the daughter whose cheeks were flushed with the joy of life.

"And Rosette is all of that," contributed Sally, changing the inferred compliment from herself to Rosette, as Sally would.

So they all called it a day and left it that way.

Things were working out well. Mrs. Buckley called and was lavish in her praise of Sally's attention to Mrs. Terhune. She brought back pretty little gifts from the Washington trip. For Sally, two exquisite

chiffon handkerchiefs, which Sally felt would be wonderful for some of the big parties coming if she didn't happen to have a cold in her head.

"I didn't really have time to tell you why I didn't want to leave Mother with Susan," she said as they sat around listening to her interesting report, a day later. "Susan is very fond of Mother and is a capable maid. But our new doctor insists Mother needs cheerful company and less medicine, and certainly no one could call Susan cheerful," joked Mrs. Buckley, who was again being Cousin Margaret to Sally.

"Susan is no cut-up, but she's awfully dependable," Sally commented, keeping to herself her first impression of Sour Susan and all that.

"Yes. You see, mother really has aches and pains, but medicines are not good for her heart." (Sally did not mention how well she knew that.) "So that having Sally to talk to, cheered her up past many bad spots. I haven't seen her better in a long time," concluded Mrs. Buckley warmly.

"That's fine," said Mrs. Perry. "I know our Sally has a cure in her smile."

"Wouldn't wonder," acquiesced the visitor. "We all believe in that theory. But Mother

has acquired a *new* bad habit. She will want to be seeing Sally every once in a while; she's grown so fond of her."

"I'll be glad to see *her,*" spoke up Sally. "I've learned a lot from being in her company. Certainly old people are very patient," Sally added.

"And young people very impatient," said her mother.

"You mean *me,* Clara Graves! Your own daughter?"

"No one else."

"That I was impatient about leaving school——"

"But you're going back now," Mrs. Buckley spoke up to avoid further friendly discussion.

"We'll see," winked Sally.

They had many things to talk over, and Mrs. Buckley simply went into a conniption fit when she heard about Rosette and the bridal outfit.

"Mother has been giving money to Roger against his family's wishes," she told them when the motorcycle was mentioned. "His folks are old-fashioned and maybe a little stingy."

"And your mother believes in young people having a chance to develop their own talents,"

spoke up Sally. "Certainly Roger Laird seems talented as a student," she proclaimed frankly.

"But his mother is frightened to death about this airship business," interrupted Mrs. Buckley, "and I hope *my* mother hasn't been unwise in listening to his side of the story. "She's his godmother and seems to think that gives her a right over his own mother," Mrs. Buckley laughingly explained. "She gave him money to get that motorcycle, I'm sure."

"I think she loaned it to him," Sally ventured. "And I'm sure he'll pay it back. He's working hard enough to get the money."

"Oh, that isn't what I'm thinking of. I'm merely afraid Mother will do something foolish and his folks would blame us," Mrs. Buckley continued. "These days of airships and motorcycles are not as safe as the old bicycle days used to be. However, let's hope everything will come out all right. Certainly, Sally, you have helped us a lot and I hope you'll run in to see us any time you can spare. Just call up on the phone and I'll send Peter over. Of course, I know you'll be busy now. You've been away from your friends and school for a whole month. It must have seemed a year to you."

"No, indeed. I had lots of pleasant hours

at your house, Cousin Margaret," Sally declared. And she couldn't help secretly thinking there were hours spent in adventures she was still keeping entirely to herself. The funny Sour Susan, the midnight visit of the young aviator, and that sick spell of Mrs. Terhune's. These at least were high spots in her brief business career.

When Mrs. Buckley had gone Sally wondered why her mother hadn't told her about the possibility of their new shop. They were such friends it seemed to Sally that would have been good news to talk over.

"It seems too remote, too uncertain," Mrs. Graves replied to Sally's question.

"Well, Mother," Sally retorted, "if you don't believe Mr. Turner was serious about that offer, just wait till you see him, that's all. You surely don't imagine he was just saying things to please me." She was hurt a little, that her mother could possibly take that attitude.

"But, Sally love," the grandmother interjected, "Mother is right. Better keep our own council, even as far as Cousin Margaret is concerned, until things are more definite."

"Oh, of course. Guess I'm still a baby, after all," Sally conceded good-humoredly. "It would be silly to talk about an Allsilk

Shop and have nothing to start on but the lost sample case that Rosette brought back. Well, I'm satisfied. Everything is all right except——"

"Except what?" both mothers asked in unison.

"Except that Roger took a day out of school yesterday and he hasn't returned to-day. I hope he gets back to his classes to-morrow."

"Is that what Margaret was talking about when she spoke of her mother being foolish enough to help the boy buy a motorcycle?" the grandmother asked, showing concern at once, for Sally's face betrayed the concern she was feeling.

"Oh, I'm sure he wouldn't do anything foolish," Sally went on. "There must be a good reason for his absence. It's just that his folks are opposed to his aviation lessons, and they opposed his getting the motorcycle to run in and out from college to the air field."

"He gave you a message for Mrs. Terhune, the other night, didn't he, dear?" Mrs. Graves was recalling.

"Yes. I took it to her that next morning, two days ago. And she told me he had paid her back the fifty dollars. I think it was fine and manly of him to scrub plane wings to earn the money," Sally defended. "And

a boy that will work as hard as that to pay a debt must be a pretty good chap, I'll say," she finished, valiantly.

"Does he often stay out of school, or college it is, I suppose?" Mrs. Graves pressed her inquiries. She was naturally interested in the boy, and, like Sally, she was secretly fearful for his safety. Airplanes and motorcycle are both dangerous enough to provoke that sort of anxiety.

Sally was glad to talk about it, and she discussed the whole situation as freely as she felt she could. It seemed Roger had expected to be away from his classes and had told her he would be for that single day. But to-day was another absent day, as Sally had learned from a phone call she put through to the college herself.

Roger Laird was not at his classes, they told her from the office, and he had sent no explanation, as the rules required.

"And he happened to ask *me* to tell his folks, if they should phone Mrs. Terhune, that he would be back yesterday afternoon. But he didn't come," Sally deplored. "I wish he would. I hate so to be in the position of seeming to know where he is when I haven't the slightest idea."

"That was a queer thing for him to do," her mother complained. "Why didn't he phone to his folks himself?"

"Exactly what I asked Mrs. Terhune," Sally replied. "But it seems they would not have allowed him the one day out, and he just had to take that for some aviation business."

"You don't suppose he went out in a plane?"

"No, Mother, I asked that at the air field over the phone, for, of course, I thought of that first. No planes went up yesterday. He went off on his motorcycle, they told me."

"Oh, well, I wouldn't worry," the grandmother tried to cheer, for plainly Sally was worrying. "A boy on a motorcycle can go a long way in a short time and maybe his cycle gave out or something."

"Of course, it really isn't my affair," Sally admitted, "and I don't even know him well. But his giving me the message for his folks, if they should phone, sort of put me in the position of knowing about his doings. I haven't the slightest idea where he went or what he went away for, and if it comes to more than that simple answer to his folks, if they ask, I'll just tell them to inquire at the air field."

"But how will they know he gave you any message, when you are not with Mrs. Terhune?" her mother wanted to know.

"Well, Mrs. Terhune told Susan, and if anyone phones, Susan is sure to tell them to call me here. It's a very silly little mix-up, but Susan is his friend just as Mrs. Terhune is, and they are both anxious to keep the inquiring relatives away from the college office. Oh, well," sighed Sally, "maybe he's back by this time, and I'm just crossing bridges without any pond."

But what happened in the days that followed that hoped-for solution to the problem, was far from fulfilling the simple wish she had just then expressed.

Roger did not return to his classes, that next day nor for many days after that.

CHAPTER XVII

ON THE TRAIL

"REALLY, Eleanor, I am awfully worried."

"But, Sally, boys often go away."

"I know; it's silly. But I can't help it just the same. Why should he so completely drop out of sight?"

Sally and Eleanor were, of course, talking about Roger. He had been gone two days and there was no clew to his whereabouts. The fussy old homefolks were making all the trouble expected of them, and poor Mrs. Terhune was all but down sick blaming herself for helping him get that motorcycle. Sally had been with her, had tried to comfort her, but not very successfully. Sally, with Eleanor, in Eleanor's car, had been down to the airport, and even went scouring around bad roads fearing he had met with an accident and was unable to call for help. But there was no Roger to be found anywhere.

"He told you he *was* going some place," Eleanor again attempted.

"Yes, but gave no hint of where."

"Was there any airport business he might have gone on?"

"I tried that too. But come to think of it," Sally brightened a little, "Mrs. Terhune talked about his going to an old man about some soap for the plane. I never thought of that. And it might mean something."

Eleanor smiled, evidently hiding what she felt like saying but did not say. They were ready to leave the house when she finally said:

"It's rather a shock to me, Sal, to find you so efficient. You really should let Mary know. She's always talking about your flexible character!"

"Meaning changeable? Maybe meaning——"

"No. She really is a regular champ of yours," Eleanor interrupted. "And just now Sal, I agree with her. You are doing an awful lot of serious things for a girl who plays such fine basketball."

"That's serious enough," said Sally crisply, and they argued no further.

Eleanor's car was at the door and in it they dashed again to the house in the Maples. Eagerly Sally questioned Mrs. Terhune.

"Yes, he did say there was an old man some

place who was working out a special soap for planes."

"Oh, where, Mrs. Terhune? Did he say where?" pleaded Sally.

"See if I can find that note."

In the much despised darning basket they found the note. It was very much pinned up, as old ladies' fingers love to work with pins, the letters were hole-pricked but plain enough to read.

"He says," read Sally, "I will be away at least one day——"

"Then that's no reason why he shouldn't be delayed," interrupted Eleanor, with reasonable assurance.

"But those motorcycles are so dangerous," whimpered Mrs. Terhune. She was wrapped in the red afghan which meant she was shivery from nerves.

"But what's a couple of days in the life of a boy?" Sally tried to joke. "I'll tell you. Eleanor and I will make another try and I'll bet we find him this time. You see, I have a clew now."

"A clew?" repeated the old lady.

"Yes, soap. He went after soap. Come along, El; we'll be on our way and I'll phone you, Lady," (she called Mrs. Terhune Lady to show how friendly she felt toward her,

"I'll phone you the minute we spy him. I'll bet he's so thick with soapsuds he can't find his way home."

Mrs. Terhune seemed to have faith in that argument, and so the girls left. Alone, they studied the note which Sally had taken along.

"You know, El, he may have gone to some out of the way old place for this soap. I wonder where soap factories are hidden, anyway? I've never seen one nor even heard of one."

"Neither have I," admitted Eleanor. "Better go straight to the airport and ask them where they buy that soap. They ought to know."

It was a beautiful afternoon with a warm sun glorifying the high colors of late fall and even early winter, and as the girls rode along the long open road that would lead them to the airport, Eleanor tried to cheer Sally with school news and the prospects of more bus rides along these same wonderful newly made roads they were now traversing.

But Sally could not be diverted.

"Of course, it really isn't so long," she reasoned, "but why couldn't he phone? Anyone can always phone."

"No, not always. There are no phones in the

jungles, you know," Eleanor reminded her.

"Jungles?"

"Yes. Beyond this big stretch of open space cleared for the airport, there is really a jungle of pines. It's a few miles out, of course, but it's a jungle just the same," insisted Eleanor holding her wheel with a firm grip as she gathered speed in the clearer roadway.

"Well," sighed Sally, "I know I'm silly, appointing myself a life guard, but somehow I feel bound to try to find him. His folks make so much noise and do so little else. They just phone about every five minutes and poor old Mrs. Terhune is frantic. It's hard on Cousin Margaret after just coming home."

At the little office of the airport Sally asked for Roger Laird. The young man in charge replied quickly he was not there, hadn't been there for three or four days. He showed his interest and Sally took courage from willingness to talk.

"His family is dreadfully worried—" she began.

"I'll say they are," the young man interrupted, "and they've got us worried too. But we don't know where he went or even where

he might be. He didn't go off in a plane, though; we are certain of that."

"Well, that's comforting," Eleanor put in, "because our car simply couldn't chase a plane and we're out looking for that boy right now."

"Hope you find him. If he doesn't turn up soon I'll do some hunting myself," the young man declared rather seriously. "I like Roger, and I've warned him to go easy on that noise bus he rides like the wind. A plane is softer than those things," he finished, shaking his rather red head, dubiously.

They were in the little office that barred the opening to the big field, Sally in her green coat with the well-known homemade helmet for a hat, and Eleanor sporting her new sport coat of brown that matched her hair and helped the blue in her eyes to shine a truer blue, if that were possible. Because Eleanor's eyes were as blue as blue and what can be bluer?

Her good little roadster stood just outside the line, and somehow Sally felt pleased that this young man in charge should see Roger's two girl friends just as they were. She had to ask him about the soap factory, however, and that did not seem so simple. It would likely sound absurd, but she could not avoid it; so she began.

"There's just one thing that he might have gone for. He seemed interested in a special soap——"

"Soap!"

"Yes; for the planes, you know."

"Oh. Yes, I remember he has done some special scouring. You mean the stuff they use on the wings?"

"Yes. He told a friend he expected to find something new, something especially good," Sally went bravely on. "Have you any idea where he would go to look for that?"

"We get all our supplies wholesale, of course," the young man with the reddish hair answered. He did have red hair but reddish is all right. "He might know of something different, but I haven't heard any of the boys speak of it. You see, there is no cleaning being done just now; we usually give that job to the poor students."

"He's a poor student," Sally returned his meaning smile, which was by no means uncomplimentary to the "poor students."

"Yes. Roger's from Eastern. But about soap. That's got me stuck. I can't see where he would go to look for soap."

"No such factories around here, I suppose?" Eleanor helped out by asking.

"Soap factories? Never heard of one.

Once in a while when we get a fire over in the colored colony, they say it came from a kitchen making homemade soap. That's as near to a factory as we get around here," the airman explained.

"But we couldn't very well go hunting through that section," Sally decided, "so I guess we'll have to wait." Her voice trailed off in spite of her best efforts to keep it afloat, for Sally was disappointed.

"If I hear anything I'll let you know at once, girls," the young man assured them. "And I wouldn't worry. Roger can take care of himself. He'll turn up all right, don't you worry about him."

That's the way men and boys always talk. Don't worry. It's easy enough to say but not so easy to observe.

Sally and Eleanor were rather crestfallen when they turned back to their car. They had hoped to get some clew at the airport but were more concerned than before, because it was plain that the men there were anxious about Roger, which meant they must believe him to be in danger.

"My best bet is soap," Sally almost snapped as she took her place beside Eleanor who was already starting the car. "He's gone after soap; but where?"

"He'll come back all right," Eleanor attempted to assure her, but Sally interrupted her.

"I am positive of that myself, El. But what bothers me is Mrs. Terhune's condition. She's really ill and if he doesn't report soon she may have sort of shock. You see, she blames herself terribly because she gave him his first payment on the motorcycle. Of course, he paid her back," Sally hurried to tell her chum, "but Mrs. Terhune could die from a real shock, and she's such a good old lady when you understand her. Roger would feel terribly if she should die."

"Die?"

"Yes. She's really always in a dangerous, or rather in a serious condition, and it wouldn't take much to aggravate that. She thinks the world of Roger and is just imagining all sorts of terrible things as happening to him. Oh, dear!" sighed Sally, "it does seem we ought to find out something."

"Now, Sal, buck up. It isn't like you to flop," Eleanor tried to cheer. "Look where we are! Over in the colored section. And who's that girl? She is standing right in the road."

"That's Rosette," exclaimed Sally. "Stop, Eleanor. We'll give her a lift to town."

The figure directly in their car's path was waving both arms and, just as Sally said, it was indeed the indubitable Rosette. As they approached, her broad smile uncovered those curiously white teeth, and she swayed back and forth in such glee that Eleanor wondered could she be crazy or could she be in her right mind, if any.

"Yal'lo! Yal'low!" she called out. "I knowed thot way you comin'! Goin' ter Nelson?"

"Yes. Hello, Rosette. Hop in." Sally was touching the spring that released the catch on the rumble seat. "Where are you going?"

"Your way," answered the girl, cunningly. "I'se always goin' the way a car goes. What you a-doin' down this a-way?"

"Looking for a soap factory," said Sally simply but rather desperately.

"A soap factory?"

"Yes. Know where there is one?"

"They is one but it's far out. Torable works there now."

"Don't start the car, El," begged Sally, grasping Eleanor's arm. "Maybe that's our factory. Where is that factory, Rosette?" she demanded of the girl who was getting to

rights in the rumble seat with a great deal of fussing.

"It's awful far out, Torable says," Rosette warned in a mournful voice, looking in the other direction where plainly she would prefer going, and turning her back square on the far-out road.

"Do you know the way?" Eleanor put in. She wanted to get going and hated standing there.

"No, I doesn't, not 'xactly. But I could ask Torable when he comes home. Ef you-all wants good soap we has it and we sells it cheap, too," Rosette proudly announced.

"No, we don't want soap; we want to find the place they make it. Don't you think you could find the way, Rosette?" Sally tried to urge her.

"Well, I might. It's a nice day for ridin'——"

"But we are dreadfully rushed, Rosette, and also dreadfully anxious. That nice young man who drove you out to our house is missing——"

"Losted!"

"Maybe. But anyhow he might have gone to a soap factory."

"I'd ride all day to look for *him,*" the girl

declared in her simple way, settling back in luxurious comfort.

"What road?" Eleanor asked, pointedly.

"This one is all right," said Rosette, and so, rather doubtfully, they started off.

CHAPTER XVIII

A CHASE BUT NO GOOSE

"YES'M, I could jest ride all day for that boy," Rosette repeated contentedly from the deep nest of the rumble seat.

"But *we* can't ride all day, Rosette. Are you sure this is the way?" Sally was impatient.

"Torable goes this a-way, I'se sure of that. This is the way to that awful place. Torable says it's a *nawful* place, away deep in the woods, like bars and ev'y thing."

"Bars? Oh, you mean bears." Sally was doing the talking, that is, she was doing what Rosette wasn't, while Eleanor clung to the wheel. It was a long, good road through the pine-bound country, out from the air field and deeper and deeper into the woodland. Holly trees grew as high as the low pines, and their waxy green shown resplendently in the late afternoon sunshine.

Presently they came to a fork in the road. No cars were in sight and, strange to say, no

informing signs marked that corner. Eleanor pulled aside and stopped.

"Now, which way?" she wanted to know.

Rosette talked and talked but it was clear she was talking against time and distance, for apparently she did not know which way Torable went to that job in the soap place. She was a good guesser, though; both girls knew that.

"He say he had a letter," she began on an entirely new track, "a letter from de ole man, no, from someone else," she corrected herself. "An' he say he don't give dat letter, cause—now lemme see!"

"Whatever are you talking about, Rosette?" Sally snapped with real impatience this time. "We have no time for nonsense. We must either find that place or go back. It's getting late."

"Sure. I says so too. Le's go back."

Both girls sighed. Here they were following a whim of this foolish girl's, already they were miles out in the country and it was by no means early in the afternoon. In fact, the sun was giving warning of shutting up shop very, very soon.

"But 'tain't no nonsense about that there letter," Rosette rambled on again when she

felt she dared. " 'Cause Torable *had* a letter; he showed me the ombelop."

"Well, when he comes home to-night—" Sally stopped short. What good would it do to ask that girl to have the colored boy give *her* directions to find the place in the pines where he worked, or Rosette said he worked, at some sort of soap making?

Eleanor saw Sally's plight and sighed again with her.

"Awful!" she said simply.

"Terrible!" Sally confirmed.

"Shall we go any farther?"

"It seems silly to follow this trail."

"Worse than a wild goose chase. There isn't even a goose."

"No. Let's turn back."

"Sure. I says so too. But doan you fret, Sally, I'll find you that soap shop. Didn't I find you them lovely nightgowns?"

"Yes, you did, Rosette, but this is even more important than that," Sally replied. "Well, we'll have to get back. I do hope Mrs. Terhune isn't in hysterics. The poor old woman said she felt as if she had murdered him."

"She did!" Rosette was all for climbing out of the seat when she heard that word.

"An' you brung *me* lookin' fer a murdered pusson?"

"Oh, no, no, Rosette. I don't mean anything like that. Just that this young man—" Again Sally stopped. One didn't have to explain to Rosette, she took Sally's word for all the rest of it.

"An', you see, Torable had a fight with the girage man and I bets he'll have a fight with this boss about that letter. For Torable wouldn't give it where it should go," Rosette was worried about that; but somehow she failed to impress Sally and Eleanor with the importance of her letter story.

Back over the shadowy road they sped, hardly speaking now, for all their time had seemingly been wasted. Rosette still talked; she mostly blamed Torable for a lot of things, the letter particularly. But Sally and Eleanor just let her talk, merely making short replies when they could not do otherwise.

Back in town they dropped her, and she made the most emphatic promises of finding out everything from Torable, even to giving him in exchange for the much talked of letter, a brown cake which she had baked that afternoon.

"'Cause you see," she said cannily, "I

knows that letter is 'bout this stranger at the soap place. He said it was."

"A stranger at the soap place!" gasped Sally. "Rosette, why didn't you tell us that before?"

"I did tells you, was tellin' you all a-while. You see, Torable thinks he's so smart." She was standing on the curb and the girls were alongside in the car. The comical figure of the colored girl in her absurd clothes was lost upon them now, however, for she was really saying something they wanted to hear.

"Tell us about the stranger; hurry, Rosette," pressed Eleanor, leaning over from her place before the wheel. "Is he old or young?"

"Young. Torable called him a smartie and tha's young. He writ the letter but Torable said he'd keep it awhile, 'cause you see, he might be tellin' the soap secret in the letter."

Sally nudged Eleanor. Could this be true? If so, why wouldn't it be Roger's letter? He might have sent it and the colored boy might be holding it back. Both girls' eyes conveyed all of that, but they said not a word of their suspicions to Rosette. Yet she, too, must have suspected the boy she called Torable, for she hinted that plainly enough.

"We never could go out to that colony again

to-night," Sally murmured under her breath to Eleanor.

"Never mind the letter," returned Eleanor, "let's find the writer. Rosette," she said aloud to the girl still waiting, "if you will have that boy tell you the way to that soap place we'll be in early in the morning to get the directions from you."

"All right. But *I* can't go in the mahnin'."

"That will be all right," spoke up Sally with real relief in her voice. "You just tell us which way to turn and we'll find the way. There are only two roads out there; ask the boy whether he goes by the holly trees or by the pines. And don't tell him why you want to know."

"I'll find out," Rosette assured them. "An' he'll tell me all right; he's got to. I gives him eats and he knows I wouldn't if he didn't."

"Be sure about the turn——"

"Ah knows them stickory trees we puts in the winders at Christmas," she declared. "They's not the standin' up Christmas trees, they's the twisty ones."

"Yes, that's right. I guess you'll make him understand," said Sally wisely, not hinting that it was Rosette herself who would have trouble in understanding.

They finally left her, Sally very much confused and naturally anxious. The further she went with this matter the more perplexing it became, and the more determined she was to find that lost, strayed or stolen boy. It would be so wonderful to find him. No matter what was the matter, something was the matter, and he was plainly unable to phone to the anxious ones. Wasn't that enough to spur the young girls on? She could not help feeling now that they had, in this queer way, come upon a real clew to Roger's whereabouts, and this was cheering.

"It's like a story," she said to Eleanor as they again moved off. "That colored boy wants to save the man's soap secret."

"You are wasting your time at ordinary things, Sal," Eleanor teased her. "You certainly should join the detective force."

"But, El, don't you think it's that way?"

"It may be. That colored boy evidently has a weakness for holding on to things. It was he who held the sample case, wasn't it?"

"Yes, he's something of a holder, but it takes Rosette to pry things loose. Well, I'm glad we can follow the trail alone to-morrow. She is not exactly a born guide, and we have no time to waste. El, I'm afraid you are giving me time to-morrow you may need."

"Saturday, Sal; the time is my own and you are welcome to it. Besides, don't you think *I* want some of the glory of finding the lost boy?"

"You're a dear, El," Sally said simply. "And I won't forget all this."

"Neither will I," shot back Eleanor. "But say, Sal, you know we have just got to get out to the hospital to see Adèle soon. What will she think of us?"

"I know, we surely will. We'll go directly we settle this. Funny, Eleanor, isn't it? We haven't thought of kidnaping. Most folks do, these days."

"Silly. Why should anyone kidnap Roger?"

"Well, he had a nice new motorcycle and they're handy to get around on. But as you say, it's silly. We'll find Roger and his noisy car complete; see if we don't. If only Mrs. Terhune won't go into fits of worry about him, while we're doing the looking. I feel rather motherly about her. Caught it from you."

But that was exactly what Mrs. Terhune did. Rave and roar, actually, about "her lost boy," for it seemed she felt he was her boy, because she had been his godmother. When Sally got home after her vain search, she

found phone messages awaiting her there, not one but many.

Mrs. Terhune wanted her: she felt Sally would find some clew and in her condition, which was pitiable, the old lady couldn't and wouldn't wait for anything. She wanted Sally, so Sally must go to her at once.

"We promised to phone as soon as you got back," her mother told her in a weary voice. "Dear me, Sally, isn't it all really too bad?"

"But, Mother, nothing has happened to Roger. That is, nothing serious. I'm just positive of that. You should have heard the airport men speak of him. *They* think he could fly to the pole safely, at least the man in the office gave me that impression." Sally tried to correct herself. "But I'll phone for Peter and go to Mrs. Terhune. Perhaps when I tell her what I've found out; or what we *guess* we have found out, I'll be able to get her to listen to reason."

"Sally love," said her grandmother, "you have been racing around all afternoon. Can't you sip a cup of tea?"

"Granny love, I'll sip it at Cousin Margaret's. Susan loves to bring me tea. There now, girls, don't you two start worrying. Let some of us keep our heads," cautioned Sally

who made the remark in defense of her own head which seemed a-swimming.

Peter looked more solemn than ever when he called for her.

"She's goin' on terrible," he assured her, in his subdued voice. "Mrs. Buckley nor the doctor can't do a thing with her."

Sally did not ask any questions. She was trying to fix things in her mind so as to be able to say something comforting to Mrs. Terhune. Rosette's story of the delayed letter might really have nothing to do with Roger's disappearance, but she hoped it had, and she would have to impart those hopes to Mrs. Terhune.

Night again, and again Sally was going down the sheltered maple drive to Mrs. Buckley's. Her heart had the habit of pounding a little as she went in there—merely a bad habit from first experiences. Susan opened the door and dropped her mouth solemnly as she let Sally in.

"She's terrible," Susan confirmed Peter's opinion. But Sally smiled determinedly as she went by and up the stairs.

"Cousin Margaret—" she began.

"Sally dear," returned Mrs. Buckley, "she's been calling for you and I'm so glad you are here. Cheer her up, tell her anything you

can. It's like medicine when they need it and we must give it to them."

"I know," said Sally simply, entering the familiar room the next moment.

The old lady's eyes found her instantly.

"Sally, my girl—Sally," faltered Mrs. Terhune, "did you—find him?"

"Almost," smiled Sally, "and I know he's all right. Why, Aunt Harriet," she began in a voice intended to scold just a little, "why ever should you worry so about Roger?"

"Because I gave him the money for—that—that—wild car——"

"He's merely delayed on business," Sally went on. "I think he sent a letter by a messenger which we haven't received—a stupid boy that just didn't deliver it——"

"A letter? Where—is it?"

"The messenger boy—a stupid colored boy—has it," Sally answered, hoping the reply was all true, hoping the "cheer medicine" would not turn out to be poison.

CHAPTER XIX

WHEN A GIRL HOLDS ON

SHE had called Mrs. Terhune her Aunt Harriet, just as Roger always did. Often the name had sprung to Sally's lips but not until she saw those pleading eyes, and held the dear old trembling hand in hers, had she the courage to say "Aunt Harriet." And it brought a quick response, a pressure on Sally's fingers and a look full of something like entreaty. Affection is catching.

"You are *my* girl too," said this Aunt Harriet, "and I won't forget you!" What did she mean? "And I do believe you will find my boy." Her voice was stronger already: it had a note of confidence that must mean courage.

"Certainly, she'll find him, Mother," said Mrs. Buckley, who had been standing there wondering why a woman who so loved the young and so believed in their talents could completely collapse at the temporary disappearance of a boy like Roger Laird. "She

just does too much, thinks too much and goes beyond her strength," she said to Sally. "That's why she has to give up so completely —no reserve."

"But she's so fond of Roger—" Sally attempted to explain.

"We all are; he's a fine boy. But his mother—" She made a deprecatory move. "She's away as usual, and burning up the wire with messages. His father is too strict and his mother is too timid, so between them Roger has sense enough to go his own way," finished Cousin Margaret, while her mother smiled in agreement. She liked to hear "her boy" praised that way.

Over and over again Sally had to tell every detail of Rosette's clew about the boy who kept the letter because he was stupid. Sally would not venture any guess as to why a letter was withheld, if it really had been. The story sounded pretty reasonable as she told it, surprising even herself that the guess should hold together as a clew when she really was almost entirely guessing. It made her think of her granny's favorite remark of a drowning person clinging to chips, and all those funny old sayings.

Sitting by Mrs. Terhune's bedside, stroking her hands, reassuring her with her own

splendid young confidence, Sally felt how worth while this had all been. How much she had learned, how much old folks love attention from the careless, care-free young folks, and how well it all works out if only the young folks will have a little patience.

Sally, herself always impatient, always ready to jump from the old to the new, always eager for change, had been unwillingly tied to this, "her first job," by a chain of not unusual circumstances, but how unusual they had seemed to her? How she hated that darning basket, that even now sat meekly on the little sewing table? How she disliked reading the stale magazine that Mrs. Terhune had marked stories in, and how she had almost hated the monotony of the elderly woman's insistence upon her companionship! At first, but it was different now.

Now it was she would have been able to help, to save that anxiety from deepening further when it might so easily amount to a serious condition in a woman of weakened age. Even the doctor could not do what Sally had done, and it was so good, so satisfying, that simple support she was so readily able to give out. What matter that Sally's vanity was being fanned? It was good to be useful, and so utterly surprising to Sally.

Mrs. Buckley was just shaking her head in that quizzical way so often seen, when a crying baby suddenly falls asleep and smiles like an angel; Mrs. Terhune playing the angel.

Sally was pretty, she was agreeing with her long-standing opinion, for Cousin Margaret had always loved Sally and her looks. Those brilliant dark eyes that sparkled from the beautifully fringed little curtain of lashes, her dark hair almost smooth outlining her classic face, and the way she sat there with that eager pose, alert, courageous, like a bird ready to fly. Sally Graves had little time to weigh the assets tipping the scales of beauty, but her friends looked on from a more advantageous position, as Cousin Margaret was looking on now.

The hand that had been holding Sally's had dropped to the coverlet, and Mrs. Terhune's eyes were closed finally.

"She's asleep," whispered Sally, as she tiptoed to the door. "Now, she'll be all right."

"And did the boy really have a letter?" Mrs. Buckley asked, when they were back in Mrs. Buckley's rooms, confronted with Susan's tempting tea tray.

"Rosette—you know the funny colored girl —says a boy had a letter from someone who made soap. I know Roger was interested in

a soap for scouring the airplane wings," Sally explained, "and it may be that the note was from Roger, and it simply is being delayed in reaching you. I'm just adding things up, you see."

"Well, let us hope it will turn out that way," sighed Mrs. Buckley. "I can't bear to see poor Mother worry so and blame herself for Roger going away. She wouldn't, I suppose, if Celia, Roger's mother, wasn't such a nervous thing. Honestly, *she* worries when the sky is blue because she knows it can't stay blue," declared Mrs. Buckley. "Try some of this jam, Sally. It's a special kind made of many fruits; Susan's pride, we call it."

They ate the cakes, the jam and the rest of it, while Sally's cheeks burned a little from excitement. Mrs. Buckley couldn't stop talking of her own anxiety about her mother, stressing again and again the point that it was because of having given Roger the money to get the dangerous motorcycle, that her mother had felt she was to blame, and after that she had just let herself go to pieces, as old folks do.

"Really, Sally," Mrs. Buckley repeated, "she declared she had killed him. Imagine that! Just because——"

"But she would imagine everything, once she let her mind go," Sally sagely declared.

"You see, Cousin Margaret, when folks are old they make up interesting stories and sometimes they make themselves the center of a tragedy. That is what Aunt Harriet was doing, I suppose."

"You have grown very wise, little girl. Perhaps it wasn't a bad thing at all for me to have brought you here." This was a frank compliment.

"Oh, it wasn't; it was wonderful, Cousin Margaret. And I'll always be grateful. But you have no idea what a lot of trouble I've been having in trying to spend that check."

"To spend it! Why, child, I thought you would have spent it first thing."

"No, it was too precious. You see, it's really my first pay check, and I want to do something so important with it, I just can't decide."

"Better get it cashed soon. You know it's a rule of all good business to cash or deposit checks promptly."

"Oh, is it? I hadn't thought of that. Well, there's about ten things I want to do with it. Maybe to-night I'll draw straws and decide upon one."

Mrs. Terhune was having a real refreshing sleep when Sally finally left with the low-voiced Peter. He always made her think of

a stage butler—he was so deferential and correct, for Peter was a good chauffeur and a faithful servant. The most he would ever do in the way of "talking out of line" was to ask for Sally's grandmother. He seemed to have a very high regard for Mrs. Virginia Perry.

At home at last, both mother and grandmother plied Sally with questions about her afternoon's search, and the sudden illness of Mrs. Terhune. Sally was feeling too good to be stingy with her answers. What girl wouldn't feel good who had just experienced the joy of being of real importance in the life of another human being? And Mrs. Terhune had plainly showed that Sally was all that to her.

"Darling, I don't like you and Eleanor going out on those lonely roads—" Sally's mother was objecting.

"Momsey, we are perfectly safe and the roads really aren't a bit lonely. They're thick with trees!"

"But Sally love, do you think the girl Rosette knows what she's talking about?"

"No, Granny, I don't but *we* do, and that's better."

"But making soap——"

"They wash the plane wings. I saw Roger do it. That's how he earned the fifty dollars

and it was worth a hundred, if you ask me."

"Are there soap factories down by the inlet?"

"I hope so, Momsey, at least one. I've just got to find one soap factory with Roger stirring the bubbles."

So at last they let her go to bed.

CHAPTER XX

IMAGINE THAT

"I'M SURE I smell smoke."

"So do I. But what's smoke got to do with it? That's what I want to know."

"Soapy smoke." Whiff, whiff, whiff.

"Sort of. Which way is the wind?"

"That way."

"Then we must go the other way to find the smoke."

Thus Sally and Eleanor were trailing their clew. Rosette had outdone herself in giving the directions that Torable had given her, and no words could report her valiant effort. But somehow the girls decided upon which road, with and without the stickory little trees, holly, and the prickory big ones, pines, to serve as guideposts.

The road chosen was leading them into a snare of evergreens such as grow by the salt water where nothing else tries to grow, and they were now picking up the smoke trail which undeniably smelled like soap.

"Good thing we started early," Sally remarked, "although I should have done some shopping first and I didn't."

"What's shopping to this?" Eleanor had few home cares and didn't have to worry about shopping.

"Do you think Rosette was embroidering that letter story? It sounded too good to me."

"But it was exactly your own guess, Sal, so why object to it?"

"I don't. I was just trying to find out if you did. And if that boy has made all this trouble by holding back a letter, he ought to get life imprisonment," said Sally, just to show her feelings.

"Over there, look. Isn't that where the smoke starts?"

"Might be, for it comes up straight just beyond that dead tree. Can we get in there?"

"I'll try." Eleanor turned her car from the ribbon road and followed a trail over the sandy stretch that was broken by stunted undergrowth. The dead tree was plain to be seen, and the smoke seemed concentrated about its location.

"We'd better walk from here," Eleanor suggested.

"I'm going to call," said Sally suddenly. "Why not? Don't jump when you hear me."

She cuffed her hands to her mouth and called loudly:

"Rog—er! Hey—ay! Rog—er!"

They waited, but only a moment when came an answer.

"Hel—low—ah! Ooo—hoo!"

"Oh!" Both girls said the little word to each other. It was a gasp of astonishment.

"He's there! Oh, El, I just can't believe it—it seems too good to be true."

"Luck, I'll say," declared Eleanor almost breathless in surprise at the answering voice. "Call again, Sal. This is your lucky day."

And again Sally called. A good, loud lusty call, that rolled through the woods in great style. And again came that welcome answer, in the same vibrant echoing yell, that might have done well at a football game if given by a cheer leader.

"It won't be long now," chirped Eleanor. "But Sal, would you give a girl a lift by taking that briar bush off her foot? If I move, it's another pair of stockings gone floo-ey."

Sally paused to pluck the briar. It was a tough one with many thorns.

"One thing certain," said Eleanor when she raised her head and Sally raised hers from

the briar business, "he isn't sick, not with that yell."

"No. Hurry. We'll break through there——"

"What's the matter with *his* breaking through there!"

"I don't know, but he isn't, so we have got to. Hurry, El. Is the car all right?"

"Hasn't stirred since we parked, so I guess it's satisfied. All right, Sal; if you pay for my socks I'll follow you, but you lead the onward march."

The girls were more excited than their scattered conversation indicated. It was simply wonderful to hear that much-wanted voice call back a merry "hello!" But why didn't he reach them?

Breaking through the wiry brambles that thrive in sandy soil is not exactly an easy thing to do, so the girls were making slow and exasperating progress. Eleanor plainly said Roger should come to them, but Sally, having a different idea, said they should go to him. She believed, unreservedly, in Roger.

"Hey, girls!" came another lusty yell, "where are you? I'm coming, I'm coming—and my head is bending low!" He was happy or he would not be thus chanting Old Black Joe! That much was certain.

"Come along then," sang back Eleanor. "We're tied—to the stake with briars."

In another moment a crashing through the bushes gave the much-wanted answer, and there—came—Roger!

His face was almost black, his clothing plainly wasn't his, but belonged to some mechanic who wore overalls and jumper, and even one of those crazy white caps with the signs on them.

"Well!" Sally gasped.

"Pretty well, how are you?" came back Roger's reply. He beamed and his face was as handsome as ever in spite of the grime.

"We thought you were—" Sally stopped. Then began again. "Roger," she changed her tone, "whatever happened to you?"

"Happened? Nothing. But I've been very, very *busy.*" He made an elaborate gesture that caught some briars in his sleeve.

"I know. But Mrs. Terhune, your Aunt Harriet, has been worried sick——"

"Didn't you get my letter?"

"Oh, do let's get over to the car," pleaded Eleanor. "My legs are bleeding and the stickers stick. This is going to be a long story and I need support. It may be healthy to go barelegged but I like stockings on a day like this." Eleanor's stockings were hav-

ing a tough time of it with the stickers, and they didn't stop at the stockings either but went right on in to her skin.

"Yes, of course. Let's go to the car. But Sally," Roger's voice was serious now, "didn't you get my letter?"

"Not a line." They were moving toward the car, Eleanor lifting her feet as high as she could step.

"But I sent it days ago," he insisted. It was his turn to be astonished.

"By a colored boy?" Sally asked.

"Yes. He works or helps about here——"

"And he was afraid you were going to steal the soap recipe or something. Oh, Roger, really," almost wailed the now impatient Sally, "we have been having an awful time."

"Simply terrible," chimed in Eleanor.

"Worrying about me?" Incredulous, to Roger. "And that boy didn't take the letter to Aunt Harriet!" He couldn't believe it. "Why, I wouldn't even wait to send it through the mail. No wonder he didn't show up today: he was afraid to."

"There just isn't any use wasting time talking, Roger," Sally said very crisply, "you have just got to get in our car, yes, just the way you are, and rush out to Aunt Harriet. I tell you she is in real danger. You see, I am

not even asking you any questions, so you can imagine how I feel."

"Go with you? Impossible. I can't even take these few minutes without risking spoiling—something awfully important," the boy declared.

"Soap?" queried Eleanor, a little slyly.

"Exactly, soap. We've been working on it every minute we could see, even had car lights trained on it. Have to have it packed and at a factory for a test this very afternoon. It has taken months to work it out and I can't spoil it by failing to reach this big business place on the time set. We have already begged for time, and we can't ask for more. I got to finish it and I've got to get there with it," he said, most decidedly.

"But what is soap compared to Aunt Harriet?" Sally wanted to know, and she acted as if she were determined to find out too.

"Oh, I know, Sally, but this is serious business. This old chemist has been working for months to get a certain chemical combination——"

"But, Roger, I tell you, Aunt Harriet thought you had killed yourself on that motorcycle."

"But I haven't. I've almost killed myself

making soap, though." He was looking at the burns on his hands and arms, and the girls both noticed he even had a couple of little red patches on his face. "Really, I'm terribly sorry, but this stuff has got to be sent off today, and I just can't even stay away from that shack long enough to be civil to you. Can't you explain to Aunt Harriet?" He was awfully confused and fidgety. Anyone could see how impatient he was to get back to work.

"Your folks are crazy too," said Sally.

"My folks? Well, they're crazy anyhow." This was said with a smile that lightened the words. "I tell you it's going to be great, but—" A sudden change of expression betrayed a new and unpleasant line of thought. Roger looked far away and stopped speaking, as if he couldn't or wouldn't believe what he was thinking about.

"What is it?" Sally asked. They had reached the car, Eleanor was resting on the step while Sally and Roger clung to the side.

"Why, I asked Aunt Harriet to send me some money," he blurted out. "But she didn't get the letter and I haven't got the money." He smiled cynically.

"How much and what for?"

"I've promised this old man, Chris Steb-

bins, to take this sample to the big factory by plane and I've got to pay for the plane trip," he said simply.

Roger's face showed real disappointment. The letter had not been received by his fairy godmother, so how could he expect to get the money for the plane trip? It was queer how these young people understood one another without long explanations. Sally instantly sprang to his aid.

"Roger!" she fairly glowed with enthusiasm. "*I* have fifty dollars of my own and I have actually got it with me. I was going to start a bank account, but if this soap business is all you say it is, why can't *I* get in on *your* new company?"

"Sally! You haven't really got that check with you?"

"Roger. I have really. And it's my latest joke. Up to date I have been in, or almost in, a number of business schemes with it and now—" she stopped to laugh a little, "I'm going in an airplane soap company! Eleanor, why don't *you* say something?"

"How can I? I am breathing my last—" she was rocking with a kind of glee, the kind girls assume when they want to.

"But then, no. I couldn't take your money, Sally," Roger objected as boys always do, and

AND AGAIN SALLY CALLED, A GOOD LOUD LUSTY CALL.

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he meant it to. "That was only a flash——"

"You can't? Want to keep me out of this big deal?" Sally was opening her purse, and now that precious first job check hove in sight. She was waving it. "Don't talk, take it. It's all indorsed. Listen, someone is whistling——"

"Chris. Terrible, but I've got to go. The plane will leave in an hour and I've got the samples to mark—" Still he was not taking the fluttering check.

"Run along," begged Eleanor, "before I actually die of—all this. Take that check, Roger. It's a real charity to do so. She's been trying to do something with it for a week and now this is it. Take it and go. We'll have the next soap samples, if you don't mind——"

"But girls—" Roger protested. "I only need ten dollars."

"Run along like a good little boy and don't lose your change." Eleanor was still talking, for Sally was busy insisting that Roger take the check. She too was talking, and Roger was getting in a murmur of surprised thanks and expostulation now and then, but the real words were Eleanor's.

"I can't help it if everything goes to smash," Roger suddenly declared. "You don't

even know what happened and Chris has got to wait." He waved his hand in the smoke direction. "First, my motorcycle went on the blink and I couldn't get up to town. Then, old Chris was in despair about getting his experiment finished. I rushed out and grabbed the first idle fellow I met to make him help us. It turned out to be Theodore——"

"Torable?"

"Yes, they also call him that, but I'll call him worse than that now, since he held up my letter," threatened Roger. "I noticed he was foxy about the mixing of things, and kept saying silly things to Chris who couldn't even understand him."

"But you've got to give him credit for loyalty," cut in Eleanor. "He was guarding the soap secret, and that's something."

"Yeah, maybe. But anyhow this is great. If I keep on borrowing money, I don't know what folks will think of me," the good-looking boy in the greasy overalls said, rather meekly, turning toward the woods from which the insistent whistling was coming. "Think I'm a robber——"

"Robber! This isn't even borrowing! I'm buying stock in your soap company," Sally cried out. "Put me down for the right num-

ber of shares and when you make a lot of money don't—forget my dividends!" She was calling after him, for he was hurrying away now, and answering to the whistler that he was com—ing, right—off. But he waved his arms backward as he went.

"Now," said Eleanor, grabbing Sally by both wrists, "get in that car. I'm going to keep going until I get to your old lady in the Maples. This sounds too good, but you were bound to find out, and Sal, you're the best little guesser on record. I'll say that much for you."

"Oh, let's hurry, El——"

"Suits me," said Eleanor, turning on the gas with unhidden glee.

CHAPTER XXI

INVESTMENT

"WELL, that tricky check has been put to use at last," quoth Eleanor as they sped on, "and I hope it sticks."

"Isn't it funny? All the things I was going to do with it? And I made Roger take it. He works so hard, I don't believe he is making any mistake in this."

"Frankly, Sal, I don't either. Somehow, it is easy to believe in Roger. He's nice and he is so—well, let's call it unspoiled. You know big folks think we are either spoiled or unspoiled," Eleanor continued, "and Roger just isn't. Well, Sal, remember me when you get rich. I just wouldn't wonder but that soap will grow famous, and maybe they'll call it after you. Sallysoapsuds, all in one word. How's that?"

"Fine. One more business and I'll just blow up," joined in Sally.

"Think of all the enterprises you have gone in for, Sally Graves. You are out of

class a little over a month, and as far as I can learn the only business you haven't tried is the butcher business. And I suppose when we stop at Flint's to-day—after, not *now*—you will try to buy some bologna stock or some frankfurter bonds. You are simply crazy about business," Eleanor assured her, more in earnest than in jest.

"No more. I used to be but I am *not* now," admitted Sally. "There's too much of it. I get sunk in its mysteries. But Eleanor, isn't it great?"

"What, the soap? How do we know?"

"Oh, I mean everything. The good news we are carrying back—" Sally was still too excited to talk sensibly. Her eyes were fairly dancing and her cheeks flaming. She had found out a lot in the short time she had been trying her own wings, and if the old chemist's new soap should prove a power in the great aviation trade, if it would, as Roger had told the girls, cut down that difficult and expensive labor of scouring the wings of these great airbirds, then Sally's small part in the enterprise might mean much to her.

No wonder her head felt like "a couple of heads," as she remarked to Eleanor. But what looked like business success was not fooling Sally. She was, on the contrary, be-

ing convinced of her own ignorance, and this more than any other argument, was even now prompting her to finish school and try to get to college if she could. Then business would be business.

Rushing through the November air, both girls were happy and vibrant to the great thrill of life itself, and adventure, such as they had just encountered, merely proved how fine it was to be well, to be cheerful and to be ambitious. Action was what solved these new problems for them, action and courage. Eleanor as well as Sally was gifted with the power to anticipate success.

"Seems to me like it's all over now," Eleanor suddenly remarked. "I loved that mystery and I sort of miss it. Still, we've got Roger's plane to watch for. Did he say his motorcycle was fixed? How is he going to get to a landing?"

"El, there's a lot of things we hadn't time to find out. But when we hear a whirring and see a skybird over this way, we'll just sniff, and maybe we will smell my soap."

"I wish we could have seen the old shack, and Chris the chemist, with the long-handled spoon stirring the soap," murmured Eleanor. "That's something else we missed."

"You can't have everything. Didn't we see Roger?"

"Oh, surely." Eleanor and Sally were not silly enough to deny their interest in the young airman. They could imagine him a pilot and even a captain. What height could he not rise to with that determination and all the other important attributes he seemed to possess?

A few minutes later they pulled into the Maples drive, and as they did a boy, a colored boy, came shambling out. He was in their path but jumped aside quickly to let them pass.

"Oh, I'll bet that's Torable," exclaimed Eleanor. "Now all our story is spoiled. He must have brought the letter."

"I hope he has," Sally said. "Then we'll be saved a lot of breath and I need what little I have left." She puffed to prove it. Besides, his story will confirm ours, and that will help."

Which was exactly what had happened. Theodore, known as Torable, had become conscience stricken, it seemed, after Rosette had threatened to have him arrested if he didn't "go right out to that ole lady with that there letter."

So he went. Mrs. Terhune was now sitting up in her big chair with the red afghan around her, and her smile greeted the girls as they entered her room.

"It's all right," she was saying. "I knew it would be. I knew that boy would make good." She brought her fine head up with pride in that assurance.

Dear old Mrs. Terhune had her faults, and those who did not know her well thought her queer and cranky. But one thing she could be depended upon to do. That was, to stand up for youngsters she believed in, like Roger.

Sally rushed up to her impulsively, took the hand that was being held out just a little shakily, and began the disjointed story.

"We found him and, just as we thought, he is too busy to bother about——"

"He's right. A boy can't be bothering about fussy women and attending to his business." Mrs. Terhune was quite her old self now, her strength coming back promptly when the pressure of worry was removed.

"We just sent a telegram to his mother," Mrs. Buckley said calmly. She was hovering near and beaming upon the girls. Perhaps when her old mother could no longer champion the cause of the young people she

would take it up. Cousin Margaret had quietly done a lot for Sally, and Sally, at least, knew that.

"Yes," Mrs. Terhune put in, "Margaret didn't want to have to talk to the fussy Celia on the telephone. If ever there was a mother who didn't know how to take care of a boy, it is Celia Thayer." Mrs. Terhune was doing just what she so fondly believed Roger's mother couldn't do; she was being an active godmother to him. And maybe she was a little jealous of the real mother. Old people, like children, do not like to divide their loves.

Sally told them what she could of the curious situation, and Mrs. Buckley had a good laugh when Eleanor told them about Sally's check. Sally was protesting, but Eleanor insisted. In her own mind she felt it was best they should all know where the precious fifty dollars was finally resting—for a while.

"That's just fine," Mrs. Buckley declared, "and Sally doesn't need to worry about it, either. We've got a surprise for her, but we want to break the news when we're all together."

"You girls are just *my* idea of what young girls should be," continued the older woman, although they were urging her to be quiet.

"You are working together. This girl," meaning Eleanor, "has been driving you away out to those woods——"

"Oh, that was lots of fun," Eleanor told her. "I have my Saturday mornings free, and Sal and I——"

"Exactly. As you should. Sal and I. That's the way for girls to chum together. Maggie, call Susan, please. I'm ready to turn in."

"Turn in" meant go back to bed, but she was a happy old lady now, with her boy Roger safely doing what he wanted to do, and her new "child" Sally— But that surprise was still a secret.

Even Eleanor was not to share it until some time later, for it being a matter of private and personal business, only those most concerned would discuss the details.

"Watch for that skybird," Sally warned her as they parted at Sally's door.

"My neck is stiff just thinking about it," Eleanor laughed. Splendid Eleanor! As Sally stood looking after the departing car she said to herself: "Eleanor is a brick."

Passing over smaller matters, such as the pleasure her mother and grandmother showed when Sally once more told the story of finding Roger like "a babe in the woods, wear-

ing greasy overalls," she could sense in the air of mystery all about her something good, very good.

Her mother's smile was just like it used to be, before the business worries had changed it, and both mother and grandmother seemed simply full of the surprise which Sally was to be given later that day. Things had turned out well, better than she might have expected had she been wiser and older. But youth should always expect good things, just as Sally had been doing.

"Momsey dear," she began, standing there trying to read the smiling faces of her two mothers, "I've tried it and I'm satisfied. I've found out a lot of things and I guess I'm ready to go back to school in time for the big game."

"Darling!" Mothers always choke up on good news.

"I knew you would find out for yourself, Sally," the grandmother said in that "I-told-you-so" manner.

"Yes, I found out," Sally admitted, "I found out that Roger Laird is keeping on with college while he earns money, and I can do it too. I'll help——"

"Now hush!"

"Why?"

"You might guess our surprise and spoil our fun of telling it," said her mother.

A secret! A surprise! How those mothers cherished the prospect in store for their Sally!

CHAPTER XXII

SALLY FOUND OUT

MRS. BUCKLEY was there with Sally and the two mothers.

The visitor had brought a gorgeous bunch of dahlias, cosmos and chrysanthemums from her own garden, for Peter had a way of sheltering a small patch of these late flowers so that the winds and frosts had not yet reached them. He actually covered them with an adjustable tent which was only removed when a good strong sun was shining.

"Those precious flowers, Margaret," Mrs. Graves was saying, "how could you spare so many?"

"There aren't many, and this is what Peter saves them for, joyous occasions, as he called them. Sally, they do look lovely in that old Indian jar."

"I think so too," agreed Sally, who was arranging the flowers. "But whose birthday is it?"

"Yours," said her grandmother. "A new kind of birthday."

"Well, I'm all ears——"

"Then sit down," suggested her mother.

"Oh. Is it a sitting down surprise?" and she flopped onto the old davenport, the one she had made her first business venture by buying.

"Sally dear," her mother began, "Cousin Margaret says her mother wants to send you to college."

"*Me* to college?"

"Yes, no one else," chimed in Cousin Margaret with a very broad smile.

"Oh, really—" Sally was flabbergasted.

"You see," the grandmother added her word, "she thinks you are smart." They laughed at the idea of only thinking that.

"I hope she's right," Sally said. "But college. How could I go? Think I'm going to let Mother——"

"Mother will be all right," that lady said calmly and crisply. "You have been so busy hunting up the lost boy, we haven't been telling you everything these days." Her smile was sort of superior.

"What, for instance?" Sally slid all the way to the other end of the davenport.

"Well, Mr. Turner was so impressed by the way you tried to straighten out about the sample case——"

"He's going to open the shop for us?" Sally couldn't wait. She jumped up and down like a little boy on springs.

"Yes. It will be all ready for the holidays," added her grandmother. "Clara, let me put that log on——"

"Let me," sang out Sally, jumping up in earnest now and grabbing the log her mother was attempting to take from the basket. "Tell me, quick. About the shop——"

"It's going to be wonderful," her grandmother began again. "And *I* am going to have charge of the hose; I like that best."

"Oh, lovely! Granny love, you like to handle stockings, I know that. Think how you have taken care of mine." Sally reminiscently watched the log kindle.

"I'm almost jealous," Cousin Margaret said. "I seem to be so useless. Why can't I have a department?" She was joking, of course, but she loved the independence promised for her friends.

"You can," said Sally's mother. "You can furnish us with cash, temporarily, when our customers fail to pay."

"But the shop! When, where, how?" begged Sally. "Oh, I don't believe I want to go to college—after all."

"You've got to go. That's part of the bargain," Cousin Margaret reminded her. "But you'll have vacations——"

"At Christmas, Easter and when I'm expelled," Sally reminded them. "Yes, that will help. But I'm so excited about it. I won't go to college this year so I'll be on hand for the opening. Should we have a big floral horseshoe? And where will our store be set up?"

"Just as you guessed, Sally; in Poole's Block. I'm rather excited myself," her mother admitted. "It is a great chance for us. As long as we *have* to go into business——"

"As long as you *want* to go into business," Cousin Margaret kindly corrected, "and you know you do. Suppose you had plenty of means——"

"As *you* have."

"Sally, behave. One would think I had——"

"Well, now Margaret, you've got plenty. And the nice part of it is you are not stingy with it." Mrs. Perry, Sally's grandmother, had a lot of compliments to pass around, it

seemed. But then, she, too, was sort of celebrating, so she could afford to be generous herself.

"What was I saying?" Mrs. Graves wanted to know.

"You should be telling me about the shop, but you aren't," Sally reminded her. "What are we going to call it?"

They finally got to talking sensibly, and all the arrangements about the proposed shop were talked of, talked about and talked for, until the board of directors, meaning those present, could scarcely think of another single thing to propose.

Mrs. Graves was to be in actual charge, of course, and the Allsilk Company would finance the entire scheme. Mrs. Perry, as she had said, was going to take on the hosiery with all the boxes and all the colors, all the kinds, and all the fancy named shades. She would wear sport silk dresses at the shop. Sally was emphatic about that, because she insisted sport silk looked best on good-looking elderly ladies.

And Mrs. Buckley was already counting up the customers she was going to bring to them. Having many influential friends, this was an item worth considering, so that Cousin Margaret would be in it after all.

"And you know, Sally, I'd like to take that funny colored girl—" Her mother was lovely to-night; joy does make nice women even nicer.

"Rosette?" Sally exclaimed.

"Yes. I think that girl has possibilities and I could train her to do all the dusting——"

"Oh, wouldn't she love that! She could wear a uniform," Sally bubbled. Rosette in a uniform was just perfect.

"Yes. She should have a chance. She's an honest girl and has done something worth while for us," Mrs. Perry recalled, and Mrs. Perry had extra bright eyes to-night, or was it the fire?

"She started me job hunting," said Sally about Rosette. "When I went into Mrs. Turrell's kitchen with those apples a month ago, she wanted to know why I didn't work, and insisted we girls 'jest didn't know.' It got me to thinking maybe we didn't," Sally wound up just in time to answer the telephone.

It was Roger. She had turned back to her audience to tell them that much.

"Yes," she was answering. "Oh, that's fine. And you got there in time?" He must have, for she went on into the transmitter: "Oh, yes, of course, we can. I'll ask all the girls

you know—" She stopped, laughed significantly. "All right then; I'll ask a few you *don't* know," she promised, which conversation was not difficult to interpret, although it was so fragmentary.

She swung from the telephone chair, which was in an end of the living room, her face betraying her pleasure.

"Isn't that great? Roger got to the plane with his precious samples, and they were tried out before a scientific committee while he waited."

"That was the soap he has been perfecting, of course," the grandmother thought she should explain.

"Yes. And Sally gave him her money to make the plane trip with those samples. Don't forget that," Cousin Margaret reminded them.

"But isn't it wonderful? It will mean a lot for Roger as well as for old Chris, the chemist," said Sally, just a little dreamily.

"And Mr. Buckley said last night that the simple chemical which was being so scientifically worked out would really be a great timesaver and, of course, a great money maker," Mrs. Buckley said. "We are terribly proud of Roger. He fought through thick and thin to help old Chris. Mr. Buckley

says old Chris is pretty well known as a scientific experimenter." Cousin Margaret knew a lot about scientific soap for plane scouring, it seemed, and she must have learned it all lately, too.

"If you could see where old Chris was hidden in the woods," Sally said, "you would imagine he was afraid even the angels might guess his secret. It certainly was a dark and dreary spot."

"But they have to be very careful about such experiments. Also, they must be out in the wilds to do their boiling and fussing, I suppose. Well," Mrs. Buckley added, "when Mother heard that colored boy's story (he was too funny in telling it!), she declared he had been loyal to his master if he had made a mistake in not delivering the letter. So she gave him ten dollars."

"Ten dollars for Torable! My, hat! What will Rosette say to that?" exclaimed Sally. "When Torable takes ten dollars to his place, which must be near Rosette's, I wouldn't wonder but Rosette will claim commission. Talk about business ability; just consider Rosette."

"Did I hear you say you were going to have company, daughter?" asked Mrs. Graves, re-

ferring to the telephone talk to Roger she had been overhearing.

"I'd like to. Some of the girls and boys know Roger——"

"Just the thing for Thanksgiving," proclaimed Cousin Margaret gladly. "Make it a big one and have plenty. Mother will be tickled to death to pay the bill, and it will let the darling old lady do one more nice thing for the young folks."

"She's a perfect fairy godmother," declared Sally, "and when it comes to *my* party, what with going back to school, talking about college, introducing Roger— Whew! won't the girls simply howl with glee!"

"Sally, it has been simply wonderful," the mother said as mothers will, sometimes.

"Well, Clara Graves," sang out the daughter joyfully, "don't say *I* did it for I didn't. Things just happened to work out all right."

"If I may be permitted to state," said Cousin Margaret, in her droll, comical way, "I would opine that the youngsters themselves worked things out all right. The girls who stayed at school want Sally to go back; she sees now that school is best until a mind is properly seasoned, so she's going back."

"Yes, but I also found out that a girl does

not have to be idle because she does go to school and I am no longer too proud to do something that pays *after* school hours. I've never admitted it before, but I used to be proud, I mean."

"There's a girl at school," spoke up the grandmother, "who minds a baby every afternoon and gets eight dollars a week for it. The principal told me that. And she isn't so poor either, just has a correct sense of values."

"And look at Roger! See what he has done and stuck to school while doing it. Made soap and scoured planes," dryly wound up Sally.

"Well, I'm satisfied with what *you're* doing," her mother said, thus having the last word of praise for Sally, who found out.

THE END

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TED AND TONY, TWO GIRLS OF TODAY
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BARBARA HALE'S MYSTERY FRIEND
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